

MASTERING GIS: TECHNOLOGY, APPLICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Integration of GIS and Remote Sensing



EDITOR **VICTOR MESEV**

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Integration of GIS and Remote Sensing

Edited by

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Series Foreword

Since 2001 it has been my privilege to be involved with the book *Geographic Information Systems and Science*, published by John Wiley and Sons, Ltd. Through its various editions, this book and associated materials has sought to present a state-of-the-art overview of the principles, techniques, analysis methods and management issues that come into play whenever the fundamental question 'where?' underpins decision-making.

Together this material makes up the organising concepts of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which has a rich and varied history in environmental, social, historical and physical sciences. We can think of GIS as the lingua franca that builds upon the common purposes of different academic traditions, but with an additional unique emphasis upon practical problem-solving. As such, much of the core of GIS can be thought of as transcending traditional academic disciplinary boundaries, as well as developing common approaches to problem solving amongst practicing professionals.

Yet many of the distinctive characteristics, requirements and practices of different applications domains also warrant specialised and detailed treatments. 'Mastering GIS' seeks to develop and extend our core understanding of these more specialised issues, in the quest to develop ever more successful applications. Its approach is to develop detailed treatments of the requirements, data sources, analysis methods and management issues that characterise many of the most significant GIS domains.

First and foremost, this series is dedicated to the needs of advanced students of GIS and professionals seeking practical knowledge of niche applications. As such, it is dedicated making GIS more efficient, effective and safe to use, and to render GIS applications ever more sensitive to the geographic, institutional and societal contexts in which it is applied.

Paul Longley, Series Editor
Professor of Geographic Information Science
University of London

Preface

'Integration' refers to the move towards a closer, perhaps symbiotic, relationship between geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing and is seen by many to be essential for the future development of both technologies. The main drivers for this move have been the proliferation of geospatial data in various formats, the pursuit of sophisticated statistical models, and the demand for more elaborate applications. Moreover, proprietary systems are no longer solely devoted to either GIS operations or image processing; all now handle data from both and all now offer analytical functions that facilitate dual interoperable analyses.

Ever since the first formal research agendas on GIS and remote sensing integration were introduced, back in 1990, by the US National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA Initiative I-12), hybrid systems have become very much the rule rather than the exception. Although data from both GIS and remote sensing are now routinely analysed by seamless interoperable amalgamated systems, many users are unaware of the numerous technical and institutional issues that need to be addressed when merging data that are derived from disparate sources and essentially represent diametrically opposing conceptual views of reality. This book explores the tremendous potential that lies along the interface between GIS and remote sensing for activating seamless databases and instigating information interchange. It concentrates on the rigorous and meticulous aspects of analytical data matching and thematic compatibility – the true roots of all branches of GIS–remote sensing applications. The first four chapters of the book confront technical issues of integration, such as data fusion, scale effects and data uncertainty, as well as introducing an integrated taxonomy of data structure and system-independent functionality. The remaining chapters explore and demonstrate most of the salient integration procedures and methodologies, using a number of applications, including the measurement of urban morphologies, the estimation of urban sprawl and population growth, urban vulnerability analysis, and the augmentation of environmental change indicators. In all, emphasis is given to the close statistical and thematic association of information from both technologies, and the merits of joint implementation of GIS and remote sensing.

This book is the result of an extensive research by experts working at the interface of GIS and remote sensing and will appeal to students and professionals dealing with not only GIS or remote sensing but also computer science, civil

engineering, environmental science and urban planning in the academic, governmental and commercial/business sectors. The Editor is grateful to all the authors and anonymous reviewers for their time and effort and for keeping to a strict schedule. Acknowledgements are also due to staff at Wiley, especially Fiona Woods and Lyn Roberts, for their patience and encouragement, to Jennifer Miller, Kimberly Hattaway, Aaron Binns, Michael Sims (design cover) and Charles Layman for constructive advice, and to Alexandra Walrath, who painstakingly (and enthusiastically) proofread the entire manuscript, contributed to the Introduction and compiled the Index. Lastly, the editor would like to dedicate this book to Lady Hilda and Sir Geoffrey Miller, who provided guidance and jovial support in abundance.

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February 2007

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Contents

Series Foreword	xi
Preface	xiii
List of Contributors	xv
1 GIS and remote sensing integration: in search of a definition	1
<i>Victor Mesev and Alexandra Walrath</i>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 In search of a definition	2
1.2.1 Evolutionary integration	4
1.2.2 Methodological integration	5
1.3 Outline of the book	8
1.4 Conclusions	13
2 Integration taxonomy and uncertainty	17
<i>Manfred Ehlers</i>	
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 Taxonomy issues	19
2.2.1 Taxonomy of GIS operators	19
2.2.2 Taxonomy of image analysis operators in remote sensing	20
2.2.3 An integrated taxonomy	20
2.3 Uncertainty issues	22
2.3.1 Uncertainty in geographic information	22
2.3.2 Uncertainty in the integration of GIS and remote sensing	23
2.4 Modelling positional and thematic error in the integration of remote sensing and GIS	27
2.4.1 Positional and thematic uncertainties	27
2.4.2 Problem formulation	28
2.4.3 Modelling positional uncertainty	29
2.4.4 Thematic uncertainties of a classified image	34
2.4.5 Modelling the combined positional and thematic uncertainties	35
2.5 Conclusions	38

3	Data fusion related to GIS and remote sensing	43
	<i>Paolo Gamba and Fabio Dell'Acqua</i>	
3.1	Introduction	43
3.2	Why do we need GIS-remote sensing fusion?	43
3.2.1	Remote sensing output to GIS	44
3.2.2	GIS input to remote sensing interpretation algorithms	45
3.2.3	Example: urban planning check and update	46
3.3	Problems in GIS-remote sensing data fusion	47
3.3.1	Lack of consistent standards	48
3.3.2	Inconsistency of GIS-remote sensing accuracy, legends and scales	49
3.3.3	Different nature of the two sources	51
3.3.4	Need for information rather than data fusion	53
3.3.5	Example: population mapping through remote sensing	54
3.4	Present and future solutions	55
3.4.1	Multiscale analysis	55
3.4.2	Fusion techniques	57
3.5	Conclusions	60
3.5.1	Integration of remote sensing and GIS into a change detection module	61
4	The importance of scale in remote sensing and GIS and its implications for data integration	69
	<i>Peter M. Atkinson</i>	
4.1	Introduction	69
4.2	Data models and scales of measurement	70
4.2.1	Raster imagery	70
4.2.2	Vector data	74
4.3	Scales of spatial variation	75
4.3.1	Spatial variation in raster data	75
4.3.2	Scales of variation in vector data	79
4.3.3	Processes in the environment	79
4.4	Remote sensing and GIS data integration	80
4.4.1	Overlay and regression	80
4.4.2	Remote sensing classification of land cover	84
4.5	Conclusion	87
5	Of patterns and processes: spatial metrics and geostatistics in urban analysis	93
	<i>XiaoHeng Liu and Martin Herold</i>	
5.1	Introduction	93
5.2	Geostatistics	95
5.3	Spatial metrics	96
5.4	Examples	100
5.4.1	Data preparation	100

5.4.2	Linkage from land cover to land use	103
5.4.3	Linking urban form to population density	107
5.4.5	Linking characteristics of spatial patterns and processes	109
5.5	Conclusion	112
6	Using remote sensing and GIS integration to identify spatial characteristics of sprawl at the building-unit level	117
	<i>John Hasse</i>	
6.1	Introduction	117
6.2	Sprawl in the remote sensing and GIS literature	118
6.2.1	Definitions of sprawl	119
6.2.2	Spatial characteristics of sprawl at a metropolitan level	122
6.2.3	Spatial characteristics of sprawl at a submetropolitan level	125
6.3	Integrating remote sensing and GIS for sprawl research	127
6.4	Spatial characteristics of sprawl at a building-unit level	133
6.5	A practical building-unit level model for analysing sprawl	135
6.5.1	Urban density	138
6.5.2	Leapfrog	138
6.5.3	Segregated land use	140
6.5.4	Highway strip	141
6.5.5	Community node inaccessibility	141
6.5.6	Normalizing municipal sprawl indicator measures	142
6.6	Future benefits of integrating remote sensing and GIS in sprawl research	143
7	Remote sensing applications in urban socio-economic analysis	149
	<i>Changshan Wu</i>	
7.1	Introduction	149
7.2	Principles of urban socio-economic studies using remote sensing technologies	150
7.3	Socio-economic information estimation	153
7.3.1	Population estimation	153
7.3.2	Employment estimation	155
7.3.3	GDP estimation	155
7.3.4	Electrical power consumption estimation	156
7.4	Socio-economic activity modelling	157
7.4.1	Population interpolation	157
7.4.2	Socio-economic index generation	158
7.4.3	Understanding and modelling socio-economic phenomena	159
7.5	Advantages and limitations of remote sensing technologies in socio-economic applications	167
7.5.1	Socio-economic information estimation	167
7.5.2	Socio-economic information modelling	168
7.6	Conclusions	168

8	Integrating remote sensing, GIS and spatial modelling for sustainable urban growth management	173
	<i>Xiaojun Yang</i>	
8.1	Introduction	173
8.2	Research methodology	175
8.2.1	Study area	176
8.2.2	Data acquisition and collection	176
8.2.3	Satellite image processing	178
8.2.4	Change analysis	180
8.2.5	Spatial statistical analysis	181
8.2.6	Dynamic spatial modelling	182
8.3	Results and discussion	184
8.3.1	Urban growth	184
8.3.2	Driving force	187
8.3.3	Future growth scenario simulation	191
8.4	Conclusions	193
9	An integrative GIS and remote sensing model for place-based urban vulnerability analysis	199
	<i>Tarek Rashed, John Weeks, Helen Couclelis and Martin Herold</i>	
9.1	Introduction	199
9.2	Analysis of urban vulnerability: what is it all about?	201
9.3	A conceptual framework for place-based analysis of urban vulnerability	202
9.4	Integrating GIS and remote sensing into vulnerability analysis	205
9.5	A GIS-remote sensing place-based model for urban vulnerability analysis	206
9.6	An illustrative example of model application	208
9.6.1	Study area	209
9.6.2	Data	209
9.6.3	Identifying vulnerability hot spots	210
9.6.4	Deriving remote sensing measures of urban morphology in Los Angeles	212
9.6.5	Deriving an index of wealth for Los Angeles County	216
9.6.6	Spatial filtering of variables	217
9.6.7	Generating place-based knowledge of urban vulnerability in Los Angeles	218
9.6.8	To what extent do model results conform to universal knowledge of vulnerability?	222
9.7	Conclusions	224
10	Using GIS and remote sensing for ecological mapping and monitoring	233
	<i>Jennifer A. Miller and John Rogan</i>	
10.1	Introduction	233
10.2	Integration of GIS and remote sensing in ecological research	237

10.3	GIS data used in ecological applications	237
10.3.1	Gradient analysis	238
10.3.2	Climate	240
10.3.3	Topography	241
10.4	Remotely sensed data for ecological applications	242
10.4.1	Spectral enhancements	243
10.4.2	Land cover	244
10.4.3	Habitat structure	245
10.4.4	Biophysical processes	246
10.5	Species distribution models	247
10.5.1	Biodiversity mapping	251
10.6	Change detection	253
10.6.1	Case study: using GIS and remote sensing for large-area change detection and efficient map updating	253
10.7	Conclusions	260
11	Remote sensing and GIS for ephemeral wetland monitoring and sustainability in southern Mauritania	269
	<i>Tara Shine and Victor Mesev</i>	
11.1	Introduction	269
11.1.1	Ephemeral wetlands	269
11.1.2	Remote sensing of ephemeral wetlands	270
11.2	Ephemeral wetlands in Mauritania	272
11.2.1	Data and processing	274
11.2.2	Results	279
11.2.3	Implications for management	283
11.3	Conclusions	284
	Index	291

1

GIS and remote sensing integration: in search of a definition

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Synergy – the bonus that is achieved when things work together harmoniously – Mark Twain

Wisdom implies a mature integration of appropriate knowledge, a seasoned ability to filter the inessential from the essential – Deborah Rozman

1.1 Introduction

Ever since its formalism by the NCGIA Initiative-12 in 1990 (Star *et al.*, 1991), the move towards ‘seamless’ and ‘hybrid’ integration of data, techniques and organization from the geographic information systems (GIS) domain with those from the remote sensing² sphere has been arduous, sporadic and irresolute. Few major breakthroughs have materialized other than the establishment of routine data format interchanges, improvements in the efficiency of interoperational relational database systems (Abel *et al.*, 1994) and modest advances in the accuracy of object/thematic

¹ GIS is used both singularly and as a collective throughout this book. GIS is typically defined as ‘a computer system for the collection, storage, manipulation, display and management of spatial information’.

² Remote sensing predominantly refers to the collection and manipulation of digital satellite imagery.

identification cross-overs (Shi *et al.*, 1999). More ambitious endeavours to create truly *integrated* geographic information systems (IGIS), sometimes called ‘total’ integration, seem to have floundered on most of the initial conceptual, technical and institutional obstacles identified by the NCGIA initiative (cf. Ehlers, 1989; Star *et al.*, 1990; Hinton, 1996; Wilkinson, 1996; Mesev, 1997). One could even say that the search for more resolute solutions, such as those related to the object/field dichotomy, analytical interoperability, the close monitoring of error propagation and the compatibility of mutually beneficial research programmes, remains as elusive today as it was in 1990. Admittedly, many proprietary geospatial systems are capable of representing and querying data stored in an increasing number of formats and resolutions, yet computational compatibility is rarely translated to full conceptual, thematic, scale and temporal compatibility. In other words, although technical expediency has facilitated the handling of data from GIS and remote sensing, there is no guarantee that any subsequent computational interaction necessarily results in strong intuitive and theoretical mutual relationships. Total integration may not be a question of whether GIS and remote sensing *can* be integrated, but more of whether they *should* be integrated – and to answer that, some discussion is first required on precisely what integration between GIS and remote sensing actually means.

1.2 In search of a definition

No one definition of integration between GIS and remote sensing exists. Instead, integration has been used to refer indiscriminately to almost any type of connection, ranging from pragmatic computational amalgamation of data to the conceptual understanding of how geographic features are interrelated. Unsurprisingly, an unbounded definition embraces a large and growing body of literature, anything from research on tight, seamless databases, and robust statistical relationships (Zhou, 1989; Smits, 1999), to applications of variable implicitness and unpredictable levels of information exchange (cf. de Brouwer *et al.*, 1990; Janssen *et al.*, 1990; Davis *et al.*, 1991; Chagarlamundi and Ganulf, 1993; Debinski *et al.*, 1999; Driese *et al.*, 2001; Brivio *et al.*, 2002). However, in the search for a narrower definition, any book with the term ‘integration’, to all intents and purposes, presumes a strict discussion on numerical calculations and complex computational algorithms, especially when the integration is referring to system-based technologies, such as GIS and remote sensing. In this sense, integration may be defined as the establishment of numerical consistency across disparate digital data models and the execution of robust programming algorithms (Archibald, 1987; Brown and Fletcher, 1994; Abel *et al.*, 1994). In addition, emphasis is on computational schemata that ensure either efficient dual operability across software platforms or, preferably, the creation of a hybrid database capable of handling incongruent data at variable resolution, complexity, quality and completeness (Zhou, 1989). Under this definition, the integration of data (the beginnings of data fusion) and algorithms may be numerically