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Daniel R. Montello (Ed.)

# Spatial Information Theory

Foundations of Geographic Information Science

International Conference, COSIT 2001

Morro Bay, CA, USA, September 19-23, 2001

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## Preface

The 5th International Conference on Spatial Information Theory, COSIT 2001, took place at the Inn at Morro Bay, California, USA, September 19-23, 2001. COSIT grew out of a series of workshops/NATO Advanced Study Institutes/NSF Specialist Meetings during the 1990s concerned with theoretical and applied aspects of representing large-scale space, particularly geographic or environmental space (this history is elaborated in the prefaces of previous COSIT proceedings). These are spaces in which (and on which) human action takes place, and which are represented and processed in digital geographic information systems. In these early meetings, the need for well-founded theories of spatial information representation and processing was identified, particularly theories based on cognition and on computation. This concern for theory provided an early foundation for the newly emerging field of geographic information science.

COSIT is not backed by any particular scientific society but is organized as an independent enterprise. The conference series was established in 1993 as an interdisciplinary biennial European conference on the representation and processing of large-scale spatial information after a successful international conference on the topic had been organized by Andrew Frank et al. in Pisa in 1992 (frequently referred to as "COSIT 0"). After two successful European COSIT conferences with strong North American participation (COSIT '93: Island of Elba, Italy; COSIT '95: Semmering, Austria), COSIT '97 moved across the pond to the United States, and was held in the Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania. COSIT '99 returned to Europe, being held in Stade, Germany. The 2001 site of Morro Bay, on the central coast of California, continued the COSIT tradition of holding the conference at somewhat remote but accessible sites. The participants stay together for the full period of the meeting to promote intensive interactions without distractions.

The aim of COSIT is to bring together researchers from different disciplines for an intensive scientific exchange. This aim is facilitated by the presentation and discussion of a restricted number of papers in a single-track meeting format to ensure that all conference participants can get involved in the discussions of the papers. As has been typical, COSIT 2001 had about 100 participants, including

university professors, university and industry researchers, and students (including doctoral candidates). COSIT is very *multidisciplinary*, and as it has evolved, has become increasingly *interdisciplinary*, with researchers increasingly sharing methods and concepts across disciplines. COSIT attracts a great variety of disciplines. The most strongly represented have been different specializations within geography, computer science, and psychology, but contributions have also come from anthropology, architecture, biology, cartography, design, earth science, economics, engineering, history, law, linguistics, mathematics, philosophy, planning, and surveying and geodesy. This pattern occurred again in 2001. The continued vitality of the COSIT program in the future will be signaled by increasing disciplinary diversity and increasing disciplinary integration.

The conference program was determined by thorough peer-review of over 70 submitted full manuscripts by an international and interdisciplinary Scientific Committee. The reviews of the Scientific Committee were managed and evaluated by members of a Program Committee; in borderline cases, their judgments were in turn subjected to criteria of relevance, innovation, accessibility, and intellectual diversity by the Program Committee Chair. This interactive and time-consuming process was intended to equitably identify the highest quality scientific contributions, effectively communicated, that would provide a balanced and spirited intellectual basis for the meeting that took place. Undoubtedly this process led to the rejection of worthy contributions and perhaps the expression of implicit biases of the COSIT community. As Chair of the Program Committee, I take final responsibility for these unfortunate shortcomings.

To kick the conference off, a two-day workshop on Spatial Vagueness, Uncertainty, and Granularity took place at the Inn at Morro Bay on September 17-18. Organized by Matteo Cristani and Brandon Bennett, the workshop featured a series of papers on various aspects of this very important topic in geographic information science. COSIT proper started with a day of state-of-the-art tutorials on September 19. The tutorials were intended to help bridge boundaries between different disciplines involved in the conference. Tony Cohen presented "Qualitative Spatial Representations and Reasoning"; Mary Czerwinski and George Robertson presented "Navigating Information Spaces"; Jonathan Raper presented "Everything You Wanted to Know About GIS, But Were Afraid to Ask!"; and Jack Loomis and Andrew Beall

presented "Virtual Reality as a Research Tool for Studying Spatial Cognition". The second to fourth days of the conference were dedicated to the formal presentations and discussions of the research papers, including one invited Keynote Address by an eminent scientist each morning. On the fifth and final day, the "Doctoral Colloquium" was held. This was a forum for doctoral students to present and discuss their research with one another and with experienced research advisors. The goal of the colloquium was to give students experience presenting research in a public forum, and to give them feedback on their research and presentations. It also provided an opportunity for students and faculty to share insights on how to do a Ph.D. in an interdisciplinary field.

Science is a social process too. The exchange of ideas and cementing of collaborations do not occur just in formal sessions. At COSIT 2001, these social activities included coffee breaks and lunches, a welcoming reception on the 19th, "birds-of-a-feather" dinner on the 20th, an afternoon expedition to Hearst Castle in San Simeon on the 21st, and a banquet that evening. The organizers hope that other occasions during the five days were found suitable for the social intercourse that plays such an important yet informal role in the advance of knowledge.

I thank all members of the program, scientific, and organizing committees for making the meeting and this volume a success. Thanks also to the tutorial presenters for four stimulating and popular tutorials. The continued support of Springer-Verlag is gratefully acknowledged. The staff and setting of the Inn at Morro Bay made for an appealing week. The generosity of our sponsors is also appreciated. Finally, the core of any such enterprise is the participants and contributors. Their effort and enthusiasm made this worthwhile for me.

July 2001

Daniel R. Montello

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# Table of Contents

## Keynote Lecture

|   |   |
|---|---|
| A Geographer Looks at Spatial Information Theory..... | 1 |
| <i>M.F. Goodchild</i>                                 |   |

## Geospatial Ontology and Ontologies I

|   |    |
|---|----|
| True Grid .....   | 14 |
| <i>B. Smith</i>   |    |
| A Taxonomy of Granular Partitions .....                                 | 28 |
| <i>T. Bittner, B. Smith</i>   |    |
| A Geometric Theory of Vague Boundaries Based<br>on Supervaluation ..... | 44 |
| <i>L. Kulik</i>   |    |

## Qualitative Spatio-Temporal Reasoning I

|  |    |
|--|----|
| When Tables Tell It All: Qualitative Spatial<br>and Temporal Reasoning Based on Linear Orderings ..... | 60 |
| <i>G. Ligozat</i>  |    |
| Computational Structure in Three-Valued Nearness Relations .....                                       | 76 |
| <i>M. Duckham, M. Worboys</i>  |    |
| Qualitative Spatio-Temporal Continuity .....   | 92 |
| <i>S.M. Hazarika, A. G. Cohn</i>   |    |

## Formalizations of Human Spatial Cognition

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Application of Supervaluation Semantics<br>to Vaguely Defined Spatial Concepts ..... | 108 |
| <i>B. Bennett</i>  |     |
| Spatial and Cognitive Simulation with Multi-agent Systems .....                      | 124 |
| <i>A.U. Frank, S. Bittner, and M. Raubal</i>   |     |
| A Virtual Test Bed in Support<br>of Cognitively-Aware Geomatics Technologies .....   | 140 |
| <i>G. Edwards</i>  |     |

**Space, Cognition, and Information Systems I**

Evaluating the Usability of the Scale Metaphor  
for Querying Semantic Spaces ..... 156

*S.I. Fabrikant*

A Semantic Map as Basis for the Decision Process  
in the www Navigation ..... 173

*H. Hochmair, A.U. Frank*

Pragmatism and Spatial Layout Design ..... 189

*S.L. Epstein, B. Moulin, W. Chaker, J. Glasgow, and J. Gancet*

**Navigation: Human and Machine Approaches**

Spatial Frames of Reference Used in Identifying Direction  
of Movement: An Unexpected Turn ..... 206

*C.R. Miller, G.L. Allen*

The Role of a Self-Reference System in Spatial Navigation ..... 217

*M.J. Sholl*

The Utility of Global Representations in a Cognitive Map ..... 233

*M.E. Jefferies, W.K. Yeap*

**Keynote Lecture**

How Spoken Language and Signed Language  
Structure Space Differently ..... 247

*L. Talmy*

**Language and Space**

Two Path Prepositions: Along and Past ..... 263

*C. Kray, J. Baus, H. Zimmer, H. Speiser, and A. Krüger*

Ambiguity in Acquiring Spatial Representation from  
Descriptions Compared to Depictions:  
The Role of Spatial Orientation ..... 278

*H.A. Taylor, D.H. Uttal, J. Fisher, and M. Mazepa*

When and Why Are Visual Landmarks Used  
in Giving Directions? ..... 292

*P.-E. Michon, M. Denis*

**Space, Cognition, and Information Systems II**

Recognition of Abstract Regions in Cartographic Maps ..... 306

*J.H. Steinhauer, T. Wiese, C. Freksa, and T. Barkowsky*

Geographical Information Retrieval with Ontologies of Place ..... 322

*C.B. Jones, H. Alani, and D. Tudhope*

Qualitative Spatial Representation  
for Information Retrieval by Gazetteers ..... 336

*C. Schlieder, T. Vögele, and U. Visser*

**Keynote Lecture**

Spatial Representation and Updating:  
Evidence from Neuropsychological Investigations ..... 352

*M. Behrmann, J. Philbeck*

**Cognitive Mapping**

Mental Processing of Geographic Knowledge ..... 371

*T. Barkowsky*

Spatial Cognition and the Processing of Verticality  
in Underground Environments ..... 387

*S. Fontaine*

Grid Patterns and Cultural Expectations in Urban Wayfinding ..... 400

*C. Davies, E. Pederson*

**Qualitative Spatio-Temporal Reasoning II**

The House Is North of the River: Relative Localization  
of Extended Objects ..... 415

*H.R. Schmidtke*

Double-Crossing: Decidability and Computational Complexity  
of a Qualitative Calculus for Navigation ..... 431

*A. Scivos, B. Nebel*

Spatial Reasoning: No Need for Visual Information ..... 447

*M. Knauff, C. Jola, and G. Strube*

**Geospatial Ontology and Ontologies II**

A Formal Theory of Objects and Fields ..... 458

*A. Galton*

What's in an Image? ..... 474

*G. Câmara, M.J. Egenhofer, F. Fonseca, and A.M.V. Monteiro*

Features, Objects, and Other Things:

Ontological Distinctions in the Geographic Domain ..... 489

*D.M. Mark, A. Skupin, and B. Smith*

**Author Index** ..... 503