

The World in Your Pocket

In 2010, our day-to-day lives have become so infused with and informed by geographic information that terms like "location-based services" have largely dropped out of the lexicon. GIS technology, operating on mobile devices and in Web applications, helps us find our way, find our friends, even find out what people we don't even know are doing all over the world *right this minute*. Fluttr, an Adobe Flex application created by designer/developer Daniel Bradshaw, mashes up ArcGIS online basemaps with live feeds from Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube and lets us peek into the lives of thousands of people.

Presenting information in a geographic context is more than just a convenience or a curiosity. Maps are powerful tools for changing minds. Just one map, the Waldseemüller world map of 1507, not only introduced the name *America* to the world (although affixing it to a continent we now know as South America) but tacitly refuted the assertion that Christopher Columbus had reached some part of Asia by depicting America as surrounded by water.

However, unlike the Waldseemüller map, which was lost for nearly 400 years, Web and mobile maps are almost universally available. Instead of having one map in your pocket, now you can easily access maps for virtually anywhere in the world, thanks to your smartphone or mobile device. The new ArcGIS for iPhone app consumes maps; contains functionality for query, find, and geoprocessing tasks; and provides access to services through ArcGIS Online or ArcGIS Server deployments.

The move to a design paradigm that employs the Web and the cloud amplifies the impact of GIS by making maps and geographic information nearly universally accessible. No longer is this information trapped in a database table, local drive, printed document, or in someone's head. Current, documented, and integrable information supplied by map services, combined with simple tools for finding and using information, is shaping our world by enhancing the decisions of organizations and individuals. This makes of even greater importance the work of GIS professionals who compile and create the authoritative maps that are served and consumed.



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editor's page

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