**Careers in Geography: with GIS Analyst Lillian Scoggins of Mammoth Cave National Park**

**What is the technical term of your current position?**

I am the park’s GIS Specialist.

**How long have you been interested in Geography and what got you interested?**

I started working with the park service after I graduated college. After four seasons I accepted an SCA position at Mammoth Cave National Park. I worked for the Cumberland Piedmont Network (CUPN) GPSing and Mapping features for the park. I worked on mapping the Parks boundary, caves, trails and watershed. Working as an SCA is how I got interested in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS). My first degree is actually a BS in Horticulture. I had zero experience with GIS or GPS.

**What degree do you have that allows you to have this job?**

After my internship with CUPN there was a GIS specialist position available at Mammoth Cave. I went back to school to get my Geographic Information Systems program certificate. I was originally hired as a student trainee and worked my way up to my current position as the parks GIS Specialist. Combined with my years of experience with the National Park Service and having a Bachelor of Science degree I was able to get hired as a permanent employee at Mammoth Cave National Park.

**What do you like about the industry?**

I love working for the National Park Service, especially Mammoth Cave National Park. Every day I am a part of a group that is protecting the world’s longest cave system and all the above ground features in the park such as, plants, animals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and cultural features and etc. I also work with Maintenance and Law Enforcement on various projects. For maintenance I maintain locations for electrical lines, right of ways, fiber optics, sewer lines, hazard trees and etc. If we have search and rescues or incidents in the park, I will assist Law Enforcement with maps of that as well.

**How long have you been doing this job?**

I have been working for the National Park Service since 1997 and at Mammoth Cave National Park since 2000. So, 21 years at my current position 24 years with the National Park Service.

**How can you see this position or this industry changing in the next 10-20 years?**

I cannot image how much more this industry will change. It seems it is in constant change with endless possibilities. I started working with Arc3.3 desktop. It seems versions change every year and programs are updated and changed constantly. There are always improvements being made to technology and equipment. Lucky for us there are all kinds of training available to keep up. It is necessary to keep up with all the new trends to stay on top of what is going on in the industry. All things are mobile now and I feel eventually you may not even need to use a laptop or desktop everything will be at your fingertips and portable.

**We would love to hear a funny story or something unusual that happened to you while doing your life’s work?**

One summer an intern and I were looking to find a cave entrance in the park. We were almost to the cave entrance while then carrying the large backpack GPS unit. Right as we were to arrive at the cave entrance, we stepped on a yellow jacket nest. The yellow jackets were ruthless they came after us stinging us many times. We could not stand it anymore we had to abandon the GPS unit because it was slowing us down and take off running. In the end we both were stung around 10 times each. We left the backpack unit until the next day when the yellowjackets had calmed down. Lesson learned for sure to watch out for yellow jackets nests in the woods.

**I’ve been asked this question myself, if you had a blank check from a billionaire, what would you do with it?**

For work I would start a GIS/GPS division at the park. There are so many things that can be done in GIS. It is a huge part of today’s society regardless of what job you are working on. I feel like there are so many more projects that could be completed at the park. If we had more people that were full time GIS we would be able to work on so many more projects.

**What types of technology are you working with now that did not exist when you were in school?**

When I went to school for GIS at WKU it was the first year of the program. We did not even have a computer lab. We did all our work in the classroom with books only. My last year the computer lab was installed, and we were able to do work on computers.

There has been so much advancement with GIS since I started. Online GIS, portable tablets and handheld GPS units are major improvements. It still amazes me that we can do as much with cell phones now that I had to do with a very large backpack GPS system when I first started working.