

# GIS Software Techniques and Implementation

## A newsletter by Daniel Elroi

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### ESRI Conference Edition

## MAPComposer for ArcInfo: ArcMap Functionality and AML

Party time!  
Yup, it's ESRI User Conference time again. Come party with 10,000 of your closest GIS propeller-head friends! As usual, ESRI will have a jam packed event, full of announcements and "revelations": the release of GIS on handhelds (ArcPad); ArcView 8 (going into Beta testing as we speak); ArcInfo 8.1 with enhanced data types and new extensions (also going into Beta now); and on and on. So enjoy the show, and don't stress out if you don't make it to all the talks, go to all the parties, get all the goodies – no one can do it all, so just enjoy!

**Please come visit me at booth 43 in the Business Partners' Solutions Fair, Wednesday evening, 6-9 PM, in the Sail Area! See you there.**

#### AML and UNIX users: Don't be left out

ArcInfo 8's ArcMap is a very powerful mapping environment. But it isn't suitable for everyone. If you have a heavy investment in an AML-based cartographic production system, for example, but want the benefits of ArcMap, **MAPComposer V1.0** may be what you need.

MAPComposer has been used on dozens of projects and has been used to produce several very large map series, including a 300 page atlas.

**MAPComposer** is an add-on module for Workstation ArcInfo. It works with ArcInfo 7 or 8, in Windows NT or UNIX. Essentially, it provides a shell around Arcplot and Arcedit, enabling *significant* increases in productivity, especially in the map making process. It is intended for the traditional command-line user, not the novice ArcTools user. In fact, the more experience the user has with ArcInfo commands and AMLs, the greater the benefits that can be achieved.

#### **Don't give up your investment in AML**

**MAPComposer** modularizes the Arcplot map making process, much in the way that ArcMap uses map layers. This allows you to save layers and share them between different maps. Map templates are possible as well.

**MAPComposer** can store, copy, share, archive, and restore map graphics without needing the source data to be present. This gives you the freedom to use map layers long after their source data have been changed or removed.

This also saves considerable time, since graphics do not need to be regenerated each time the map is altered.

During a five year period, **MAP-Composer** has been shown to reduce the time required to create new maps by **up to 30%**, and the time required to update maps by **up to 50%**, especially in situations requiring a lot of edits.

Another unique feature of **MAP-Composer** is WYSIWYG editing in Arcedit – edits are immediately shown in the final map!

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To find out more about **MAPComposer**, visit [www.elroi.com/mapcomposer](http://www.elroi.com/mapcomposer).

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## Straight talk straight from the top: An interview with ESRI's David Maguire – Part 2

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*David Maguire is the Director of Products at ESRI. In the previous issue of my newsletter, David shared some thoughts with us on ArcInfo 8 and beyond, ArcObjects, COM, and Java. In this issue, we continue the interview, discussing ArcView 8, ArcExplorer, and more.*

### **The future of ArcView**

**Q: Please tell me about the future of ArcView**

A: The plan is that the next generation of ArcView, which will be called ArcView 8.1, will be released simultaneously with ArcInfo 8.1; and it will be built from the same common technology we've already shown in ArcInfo 8.01 and 8.02. It will essentially be ArcMap and ArcCatalog, minus the ability to edit coverages and geodatabases. Our goal is to do everything ArcView 3.2 does, in the new framework. There will be a few exceptions to that, because they just don't make sense. But our goal is to get as close to that as is feasible.

**Q: Is someone writing an APR-to-MXD convertor yet?**

A: We're working on that. What we know is that we can definitely convert some things, and we definitely cannot convert others. Things like symbology, pathnames we can do. Things like Avenue code we can't yet do.

**Q: So will the ArcView 3 architecture cease to exist?**

A: We're working on a 3.2a patch right now, which we hope to have on the web, freely downloadable, before the User Conference. And we definitely envisage a follow-on release beyond 3.3.

**Q: Well, I certainly hope so. There's a huge client base there in applications that are based**

**on the current architecture.**

A: Yes, half a million seats.

**Q: So back to ArcView 8.1. Do you think that ESRI can maintain the 1:10 cost ratio between ArcView and ArcInfo, even when ArcView is based on the same technology?**

A: We're going to try. We also want to offer some other price points in between the \$1,000 and \$10,000 points, so that there's not a huge binary divide between the ArcView user and the ArcInfo users. We've been playing around with the notion of an ArcInfo Editor seat. Maybe an ArcInfo Map Viewer seat as well. This would give us four or five offerings in a spectrum that people can buy.

### **Other technologies from ESRI**

**Q: How is ArcExplorer going to fit in this brave new world?**

A: The next generation of ArcExplorer will be Java based, and it will be cross platform. It won't have very much more functionality, just a few things, and it will continue to satisfy the low end.

**Q: Regarding the new ArcPad, do you see re-writing it in the same technology as everything else, so that it can be customized with VB? Or is that something else all together?**

A: Right now Windows CE and other PDAs have such very strict and very specific requirements. This means that we decided it's better just to develop technology for that environment than to try to port generic technology. You've got the constraints of lower speed processors, very constrained screen real estate, and the need to work with a pen-based user interface, and a number of other things as well.

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