Abstract. Traditional geographic information provided by authoritative sources results from a lengthy and labor-intensive process of synthesis. Census data, for example, is compiled from billions of raw observations, and little detail is available about the process by which synthesis is achieved. By contrast, the vast amounts of geographic information that are now appearing on the Web are largely produced by non-experts, and any integration is likely achieved by software rather than the intervention of experts. Several examples are cited. Asserted geographic facts are clearly of variable quality, and three general strategies are advanced for addressing quality control: Linus's Law, social strategies, and strategies that make use of fundamental geographic knowledge.

Michael Goodchild is Professor of Geography at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Director of UCSB’s Center for Spatial Studies. He received his B.A. degree from Cambridge University in Physics in 1965 and his Ph.D. in geography from McMaster University in 1969, and has received four honorary doctorates. He was elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and Foreign Member of the Royal Society of Canada (2002), member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2006), and Foreign Member of the Royal Society and Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy (2010); and in 2007 he received the Prix Vautrin Lud. He was editor of Geographical Analysis between 1987 and 1990 and editor of the Methods, Models, and Geographic Information Sciences section of the Annals of the Association of American Geographers from 2000 to 2006. He serves on the editorial boards of ten other journals and book series, and has published more than 15 books and 400 articles. He was Chair of the National Research Council’s Mapping Science Committee from 1997 to 1999, and currently chairs the Advisory Committee on Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences of the National Science Foundation. His current research interests center on geographic information science, spatial analysis, and uncertainty in geographic data. For more information, see Michael Goodchild's complete CV.

The objectives of the ThinkSpatial brown-bag presentations are to exchange ideas about spatial perspectives in research and teaching, to broaden communication and cooperation across disciplines among faculty and graduate students, and to encourage the sharing of tools and concepts.

Please contact Don Janelle (ext 5267, janelle@spatial.ucsb.edu) to review and schedule possible discussion topics or presentations that share your disciplinary interest in spatial thinking.