James Boxall teaches geography and GIS at Dalhousie University where he holds appointments in: School of Planning; School of Information Management; Earth Sciences; Environmental Programmes; and Marine Affairs. In 1997 he participated in the Alexandria Digital Geolibrary review. He is a Fellow of both the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society (RCGS), and is currently a Governor of the RCGS, chairing the Research Grants Committee, also receiving the RCGS Education Medal in 2012. He is also on the Board of Governors for the Nova Scotia Museums. He is on the local committee for Digital Earth 2015 to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is on the review board for the Journal of Map and Geography Libraries, and currently co-chairs the International Network for Learning and Teaching Geography in Higher Education (INLT). He recently completed two years as co-chair of the Canadian Round Table on Geomatics (NRCan), and is presently co-editing a book on GIScience Research and Education in Canada. As a geographer and librarian, his interests tend to focus on bridging gaps in geoliteracy through geolibraries; as a native Atlantic Canadian, his passion is with how to merge geoliteracy and geospatial information with saving the oceans. He proudly accepted the Esri SAG Award for Dalhousie University Libraries in 2012.

Presentation Abstract: Re-positioning Spatial Discovery

Two decades ago we saw the rise of some innovative visions for spatial discovery. We also were presented with a stark cautionary note: “It is possible that libraries will be the principal means whereby citizens gain access to the services of the distributed geolibraries of the future; it is also possible that libraries will play no significant part in that process” (Mapping Science Committee, 1999). For those in the knowledge management sector (libraries, archives, museums) it raises the blunt question of the status and future of our position in the discovery process; simply put, where are we on this continuum of “significance” in light of current and likely “futures of spatial.” Spatial has become so widespread that we need to take the time to think through what we can let go, what we need to do, and what emerging areas deserve some attention. Most importantly, it is a good time to reconsider the value of spatial and how we, as a community of experts, make the case for the value.