



News Bureau

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News Release

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NMSU associate professor receives prestigious applied geography award

Roger Tomlinson is the creator of modern Geographic Information Systems and has been called the “father of GIS.” Jack Dangermond owns a multi-billion-dollar GIS company. Richard D. Wright is one of the first educators to teach about GIS. Michael DeMers is an associate professor in the Department of Geography at New Mexico State University whose areas of specialty includes GIS and landscape ecology.

What do all of these men have in common?

They have all been recipients of the prestigious James R. Anderson Medal of Honor in Applied Geography.

DeMers received the award for 2010.

“It was a very humbling experience when I learned I had received the award,” DeMers said. “If you look at the names of the people who have won in the past, you can’t help but be humbled. This is one of the most respected awards in the Association of American Geographers.”

Ironically, DeMers serves on the Anderson Medal Committee, charged with selecting award recipients each year. When he first heard that Wright had nominated him, he thought it was all a big joke and replied to Wright with, “...wink, wink, nod, nod!”

Then, he found in his inbox an email informing him that he was the recipient of the award.

“I just stared at the (computer) screen and all of a sudden, I could feel my pulse

The James R. Anderson Medal of Honor in Applied Geography is awarded to a person in recognition of notable contributions to the advancement of the profession through outstanding

accomplishments in the areas of industry, government, literature, education, research, service to the profession of geography, or public service.

DeMers was recognized for “exceptional accomplishments in applied geography education, research and service to the profession and the wider public,” according to documentation released from the award committee.

DeMers research focuses on land-use modeling, classification and evaluation.

His early work on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service Land Evaluation and Site Assessment model is the single largest collection of GIS research. According to the committee, DeMers’ approaches underlie the development of standalone software and modules designed to preserve the best of agricultural lands in the country. He is also considered a trailblazer using virtual reality environment –such as Second Life – for online course delivery.

DeMers has published several books, among them a collaborative work that is a continuing labor of love – “Supporting Curriculum Development in Geographic Information Science and Technology: The GIS&T Body of Knowledge.” The book is the result of many years of work by researchers to compile skills and concepts of GIS&T.

According to the award committee, this publication “has been adopted by many national organizations as the ‘gold’ standard for GIS certification.”

Receiving this honor, DeMers said, validates the seven years of work that went into this publication and its updated editions.

DeMers has participated in several organizations including the U.S. International Society for Landscape Ecology and the Association of American Geographer’s Biogeography, Applied Geography and Geography Education specialty groups

He has served as an expert witness for projects involving water rights and off-road vehicle impacts, and has created a competency-based GIS certification program for county employees

He received a bachelor’s degree in Earth Science and a master’s degree in geography from the University of North Dakota. He earned a doctorate in geography from the University of Kansas.

DeMers received his medal at a ceremony in Seattle, Wash., in April.



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CUTLINE: Michael DeMers is the 2010 recipient of the James R. Anderson Medal of Honor in Applied Geography. (NMSU photo by Darren Phillips)