

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have the ability to query and analyze geographic information in a variety of different contexts. With the power to spatially represent many kinds of data, a GIS can help identify new patterns and relationships. Once limited to a handful of geographers trained in computer programming, GIS has rapidly spread to touch just about every walk of life, including both libraries and business. This presentation will provide a sampling of how GIS can be used in a library setting to help answer business reference questions. Example such as site selection and marketing will be showcased.

Traditionally, GIS programs have had steep learning curves which have limited its impact in many areas. However in recent years, several new GIS packages have made the technology much more user friendly. Helping to spur this development of GIS is the sudden and widespread availability of datasets being released by government agencies and some private sector organizations. This presentation will highlight the best sources for datasets (in Oregon), many of which can be downloaded from the internet.

While GIS is a powerful and useful tool for Business Reference, there are both advantages and disadvantages to the software. This presentation will examine the issues that a library will need to consider before moving ahead with any kind of GIS implementation.