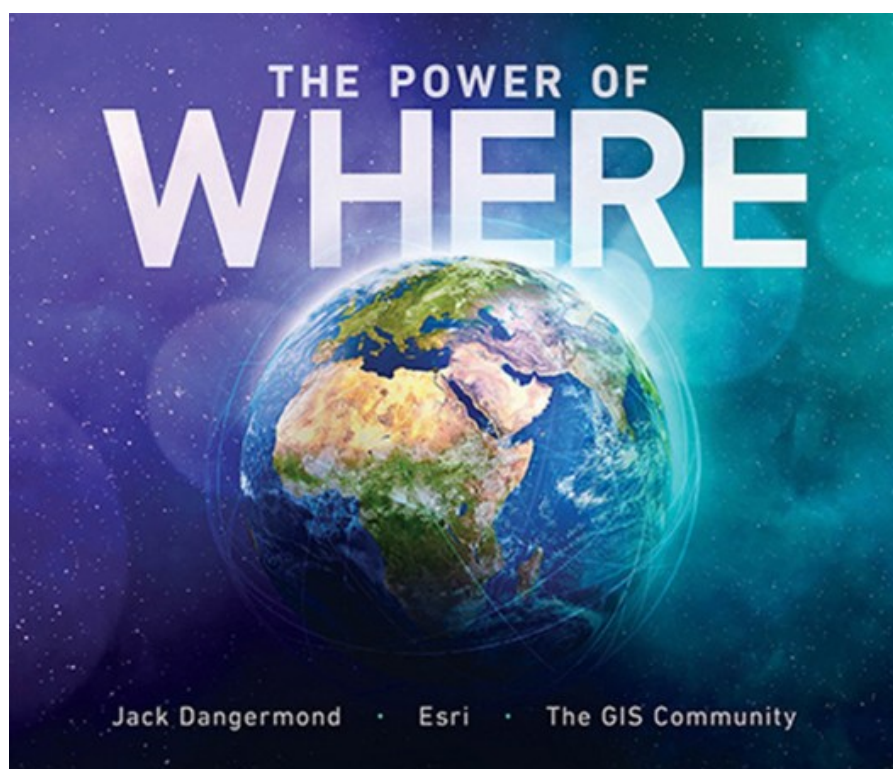




[< issue toc next >>](#)

Book review: The Power of Where: A Geographic Approach to the World's Greatest Challenges

reviewed by Lois M. Evans



Dangermond, Jack. *The Power of Where: A Geographic Approach to the World's Greatest Challenges*. Redlands, California: Esri Press, 2024. 300 p. \$59.99. LC: 2024932267. ISBN: 978-1589486065.

Like the annual *Map Books* produced for Esri user conferences, *The Power of Where: A Geographic Approach to the World's Greatest Challenges* is a compendium of beautiful maps that librarians and GIS enthusiasts will find irresistible and can justify purchasing based on the content. An introduction to geographical information systems (GIS), its history, and its uses, *The Power of Where* is written with general



audiences and high school and college educators and students in mind. The book is supported by a website featuring maps from the book and tutorials introducing ArcGIS (www.powerofwhere.com).

The book is organized into eight chapters “geo” subjects: the geographic approach; geodata; geovisualization; geocommunication; geoanalysis; geocollaboration; geoaccounting; and geodesign. Each chapter defines the subject, introduces key concepts, demonstrates with maps, illustrations, and photographs, and shows their application in real-world settings in a case study. The production quality of the print book is notable with a slick, modern design, classic, readable fonts, and full colour printing on quality paper and a digital Kindle edition is also available. Like many cartographic works, the print edition of *The Power of Where* is a bit unwieldy, at 12 inches wide by 10 inches tall and 0.75 inches deep and perfect bound with a soft cover, which makes the book more affordable but a bit floppy and therefore most easily read when positioned on a tabletop.

In terms of aim and tone, *The Power of Where* was published by Esri Press, established in 1984 with the mission “to inform, inspire, and teach professionals, students, educators, and the public about [GIS] technology” and the goal “to increase the adoption of ArcGIS and support the vision of Esri” (www.esri.com/en-us/esri-press/overview). Given these two factors, the mix of GIS evangelism and Esri marketing in the text is somewhat expected and generally forgivable. As the now billionaire founder of Esri, author Jack Dangermond is well positioned to write about the early days of GIS and the founding of Esri with his wife Laura in 1969. In the introduction, Dangermond acknowledges other early GIS researchers, credits the significant contributions of Esri staff and the GIS community, and underplays the Dangermonds’ philanthropical endeavors including a \$165 million-dollar contribution to The Natures Trust that protected about 25,000 acres of California habitat and coastline (see “A Virtual Digital Twin,” p.31).

Balancing the Esri bias is the effort made to highlight humanitarian themes including social justice and climate action and the ways that GIS activities support these efforts. While at least half of the 500 illustrations feature the United States, about a quarter reflect global and/or planetary subjects and the remaining quarter other regions and countries of the world. A memorable global example is the “From source to sea: Mapping marine plastic waste,” which depicts ocean garbage patches and the source rivers (p.18-19, 269). “What is Geodesign,” the last chapter, includes a timeline that reflects important geodesign contributions and includes sections on green infrastructure, flooding and river revitalization, and smart cities



(p.238-261). Similarly, in “What is Geospatial Analysis,” the book covers newer GIS developments, from 3D analysis to knowledge graphs, geospatial AI, predictive analysis, and modeling and automation (p.162-193). One downside of the book is that these sections can be difficult to find as they are not listed in the table of contents and there is no index, which means that even after finishing the book the reader may find it difficult to rediscover a section of interest (e.g., lidar). While the maps are captioned, none are dated, and some of the Image Credits are too abbreviated to be useful.

These critiques aside, *The Power of Where* provides good value based on its breadth, content, and especially for its currency as the book is a memorable gateway to the world of GIS circa 2024. The print and digital editions are both worthy of inclusion in general and map library collections; the print edition might perform best if designated as a reference book and placed in a high-traffic area for users to discover and enjoy.

Lois M. Evans
Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia
New Westminster
BC, Canada

[< issue toc next >>](#)