Scott Bell (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara) is a Professor of Geography and Planning and Director of The Spatial Initiative at the University of Saskatchewan. He is also a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University in the Center for Geographic Analysis. His research interests include spatial cognition, human navigation and wayfinding, and the integration of ubiquitous sensors and sensing systems to facilitate and study human interaction, mobility, and decision-making. He is also involved in interdisciplinary and collaborative research on health geography, sustainability, education, and urban environments. Currently funded projects include an examination of the role of drawing and artistic ability in the communication of what is known about the world (what is held in our cognitive map) and an interdisciplinary project with a focus on better understanding the arrangement, availability, and access to primary health care services in Canadian cities. His research is published in journals of Geography, Epidemiology, Health, Computer Science, and Geographic Education.

As a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, Scott has introduced a GIS research Institute that has trained over 150 scholars in aspects of spatial thinking, analysis and communication. Initially developed at Brown University, Scott brought the Institute model to the Center for Geographic Analysis in 2009. A hallmark of the program is the tight integration of learning to think spatially with the tools of GIS and an individual’s research expertise. Through the completion of both GIS training and a research project of their own, participants engage actively in the learning process while embedding their learning in their personal area of research interest. Integration of learning and doing (experiential learning) is an effective method for increasing the traction of learning and ensuring positive student/learning outcomes; spatial thinking is perhaps uniquely situated to benefit from such approaches.

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