Foreword

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Throughout my career I have been convinced that the use of geographic information systems (GIS) technology by businesses would result in better decision-making, increased efficiency, significant cost benefits, and improved customer satisfaction. Although GIS is very widely used by local, state, and federal governments and utilities, most of the business community has been slow to embrace this technology. One reason for the slow adoption of spatial technologies has been the lack of educational opportunities to learn about GIS in our business schools. In recent years, the business community has discovered GIS and the advantages of spatial analysis. But still, GIS is rarely taught in business schools. Part of the reason for the dearth of GIS in business schools is the lack of research books on GIS with a focus on the business side, good textbooks, and usable case studies on GIS applications to business processes. I expect that this book will help change that by making available a valuable resource for educators and researchers.

This book brings together North American and European leaders of thought in the use of GIS for business applications. The contributors to this book are a veritable "Who's Who" from the academic world of GIS and business. The book covers a broad range of topics and business applications, from agriculture to real estate to health care. The chapters address and expand on important business-related methods and concepts including spatial decision support systems, the design of enterprise wide GIS systems, a software design approach to GIS-based knowledge discovery using qualitative reasoning, the role of GIS in systems that include a wide variety of geospatial data sources, conceptual models of e-geobusiness applications, the relationship of GIS to mobile technology and location based services, and emerging technologies.

As we fully enter the Information Age, we are experiencing an overwhelming flood of data. We need tools to help us sift through and organize the data to find useful information that can better inform business processes. Geographic information systems provide us with a powerful tool for organizing and searching data within geographies.

This book is useful to business school professors who want to offer their students the best of the new techniques, business school students looking for marketable skills, business leaders looking for an edge in a highly competitive business environment, and individuals looking to improve their skill set to better compete for jobs in a high-tech world.

I believe that this book will help us move toward a more spatially literate society, a world in which the business schools are providing comprehensive education that includes an understanding of the spatial sciences and how to use the powerful tools for analysis of geographic data.