

Date

Wednesday 18 July 2007

Title of session

Workshop 3 - Archiving Geospatial Data for Long-term

Name of presenter/chair

Chair: Adrian Brown, Head of Digital Preservation, The National Archives, UK

Presenters: Eunice Gill & Linda Stewart, The National Archives  
Steve Morris, North Carolina State University  
Humphrey Southall, University of Portsmouth  
Prof Fraser Taylor, Carleton University, Canada

Rapporteurs

Nicholas Hutchings, Defence Geographic Centre and Jenny Harding, Ordnance Survey

Discussion, questions and answers following all presentations

Questions	Answers
<p>Adrian Brown (The National Archives, UK): How far along the road are we towards achieving the nine potential solution elements (listed in Fraser Taylor's slides)</p>	<p>Fraser Taylor: In a research sense we are moving ahead. In an implementation sense there may not yet be a single NMA in the world that is effectively archiving data, however archiving is recognised as an issue. It is too much to ask archivists to take all responsibility to archive material; partnerships are needed.</p>
<p>Is 'historical GIS' an answer for archiving geospatial information?</p>	<p>Humphrey Southall: No this cannot be a solution as historical GIS involve loading data into proprietary formats. Archive copy needs to be in a different format to working copy, to be accessible longer term.</p> <p>Fraser Taylor: The GB Domesday digital data from the 1980s was almost lost due to the format used. Much money was spent to retrieve the data.</p> <p>Humphrey Southall: Preservation is an ongoing process, it is necessary to periodically update the formats that data is held in; preservation costs more retrospectively</p> <p>Steve Morris: Often people have not given thought (in time) to preservation. There may be relatively low cost ways to make sure that data is more likely to survive.</p>
<p>Trevor Shaw (National Land Agency, Jamaica): Is the safest way forward a format-neutral record - such as paper copies?</p>	<p>The interactivity of digital geospatial information needs to be preserved.</p>
<p>Malcolm Havercroft (Ordnance Survey, GB): Do software vendors take into account the need to preserve data, for example in the format options they provide?</p>	<p>Adrian Brown: Open standards begin to address format issues. Some software will allow access to files without having to use proprietary formats. Part of the solution lies with software vendors to support interoperability and accessibility over time.</p>
<p>Malcolm Havercroft (Ordnance Survey, GB): Archiving geospatial data is a wider issue than the GI itself. Information will be needed about the specifications etc to be able to access it.</p>	<p>Eunice Gill : Ordnance Survey meet regularly with the National Archive to make sure that information is preserved, including ancillary documents (user manuals etc). An aim is to archive all information relating to the context of the data.</p> <p>Humphrey Southall: It is best to keep files in, for example, plain text format so that they can be read in future.</p> <p>Fraser Taylor: The partnership between Ordnance Survey and The National Archive UK is a good example of a way forward.</p>

<p>Paul Hardy (ESRI) (Comment): Technology is part of the problem but software can be part of the solution, making it possible to simulate computer systems of the past. There is also usually backwards compatibility within a software family. A snap shot of systems used is probably needed as well as of the data.</p>	<p>Adrian Brown (comment): There are two approaches at present to archiving: the 'emulation approach' where the original behaviour of a system is preserved, and the 'format migration' approach.</p>
<p>Nicholas Hutchings (Defence Geographic Centre, UK): What is the recommended physical format/medium for preserving data?</p>	<p>It is best to use that which is currently in mainstream use, as it is more likely to be able to be translated from in future. Use of cutting edge technology at a given time is problematic as it may not be the medium that becomes widely used.</p>
<p>Fraser Taylor: The difficult issues for preservation of data are the administrative and business case issues. Organisations need a strong business case (based on anticipated need/demand for the data).</p>	
<p>Adrian Brown (discussion point): Global problem solving will require historic georeferenced data. What problems will we face?</p>	<p>Fraser Taylor: Huge amounts of remote sensing data have been lost as they have not been used.</p> <p>Eunice Gill: (with respect to question on whether OS landline archives are used) Archive copies of Landline may be accessed from various libraries. The Ordnance Survey, GB, has referred back to The National Archive for archived Landline for specific business needs.</p>
<p>Adrian Brown (concluding comment): It is good to see that the question of preservation and archiving of geospatial information has a place at the Cambridge Conference this year, and we hope to see workshops on the subject at future conferences.</p>	