

Date

Thursday 19 July 2007

Title of session

Workshop 4 - GI Knowledge Portal

Name of presenter/chair

Chair: Vanessa Lawrence, Director General and Chief Executive, Ordnance Survey
Contributors: Ian Dowman, President, ISPRS
Nick Land, Executive Director, EuroGeographics
Harlan Onsrud, Interim Executive Director, GSDI Association
Gina Weir-Smith, African Geo Information Research Network

Name of rapporteur

Cheryl Morrow, Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland

A very lively session started with presentations to encourage feedback from potential contributors and users of the GI Knowledge portals.

Presentation title: Beyond Cambridge – rising to the challenge – Vanessa Lawrence

Vanessa enthusiastically chaired the session by firstly reminding the workshop of the challenge put forward at the CC Exchange in 2005. The Exchange provided excellent networking opportunities for all those in attendance to explore the trends and challenges that both business and technology presented.

At the Exchange Jean Dotse, Director of Surveys, Ghana, who was also present at today's workshop, issued a challenge that NMOs in developed countries should take ownership of supporting NMOs in developing countries. Those present at the Exchange then classified NMOs into four representative levels considering their advancement and development in terms of technology.

Vanessa reiterated how keen Mr Dotse and others at the exchange were to develop a knowledge bank in the form of a portal to optimise support. As a result the development of the Geo Portal was born. The portal would be designed to contain documents fundamental to NMOs to enable developing NMOs to begin learning at an advanced stage. Papers for the portal were desired to be practical rather than academic allowing service and technical experience to be easily interpreted.

The benefits of the centrally managed depository of the portal were clearly laid out by Vanessa:

- Making organisations aware of the help and support available to them
- The sharing of experience and knowledge through staff exchanges
- The effective management of physical resources through advertisement and distribution of surplus equipment

Vanessa concluded her introductory presentation by reinforcing the need to ensure knowledge portals have the information that users need. She added that this workshop should be seen as one that assists everybody to run NMOs in a better and more knowledgeable way.

Nick Land, Executive Director, EuroGeographics - addressed the workshop in his capacity as a board member of the GSDI. GSDI considers the sharing of documents, knowledge, equipment and case studies to be key in this very important initiative. Nick highlighted that today's workshop included delegates representing all continents and thus it was imperative that feedback on the portal was gained from the potential contributors and users present.

Presentation title: JBGIS input to the GI Knowledge Portal - Ian Dowman

The JBGIS identified capacity building in Africa as a priority activity for societies involved in Geospatial Information. Discussions following the CC Exchange in 2005 and the GSDI Chile conference in 2006, led to an approach by JBGIS to EIS Africa to build a portal for NMOs in Africa into AGIRN. As a result the JBGIS has initiated a pilot project through AGRIN aimed at the African NMOs.

Presentation title: A National Mapping Agency web portal for Africa - Gina Weir-Smith

After providing some history of the African Geo Information Research Network (AGRIN) leading to

the development of the pilot site, Gina explained the rationale behind the NMA page. The objectives of the web portal were very clearly set out by Gina as below:

- To serve all African NMOs on the one central web portal
- To publish a list of all NMOs with their contact details
- To share knowledge and experience applicable to NMOs
- To advertise services related to NMOs available on the continent
- To create a network which can share in available equipment

Harlan Onsrud demonstrated a hands-on look at the prototype Geographic Information Knowledge Portal which can be accessed via the following web address

<http://geodatacommoms.umaine.edu/portal>. The demonstration covered several aspects of the portal including:

- Geographic Information Community Registry
- Depositing spatial documents
- Finding spatial documents
- Mapping Agency central
- Spatial data infrastructure survey responses
- Quarterly Global Survey and
- Best Geo Web Resources

Geographic Information Community Registry – this section of the portal invites government agencies, individual specialists, private companies and NGOs or non profit organisations to place their contact details, expertise and interests on the global map. This is aimed at creating a SDI and GIS-related global registry for the mapping community.

Depositing spatial documents – This can be achieved through the Spatial Documents Depository section of the web portal. Anyone wishing to submit a document must first register with the Spatial Docs Depot. There are certain category choices available for the contributor to assign their document to allowing a user search to be carried out based on category. The Spatial Documents Depository also hosts the following communities:

- SDI/GIS: Practice and Applications
- Geographic Information Science: Research
- Geographic information Science: Education and Training

Finding spatial documents – A user of the knowledge portal can locate the information required through searching the Spatial Doc Depot. A user searching under category will be able to find a document regardless of the primary community or collection in which the document has been placed.

Mapping Agency central – This area in the portal contains global map and the National Mapping Agency Contact list. It also holds information on the status of NMA spatial data infrastructure developments. A particularly valuable aspect of this section of the portal is the mapping agency discussion forum allowing key issues to be raised and discussions to take place across a world wide mapping community. Surplus equipment and human resource exchange can also be managed from this section allowing developing organisations to benefit greatly with the support of well established NMOs.

Spatial data infrastructure survey responses – Summary results are automatically published in this

section from the entries supplied under the GI community registry.

Quarterly Global Survey – What geospatial infrastructure capabilities, services or products are most needed to support societal needs across the globe? This is the one question that the geospatial community is asked by the survey four times a year. Accumulated responses can be viewed by users as well as suggesting questions for future global surveys.

Best Geo Web Resources – This section gives an opportunity for users to expand further into the geospatial community through providing index sites intended as starting points for access to further material.

Harlan concluded his demonstration by urging delegates to review the various portal pages and then respond to various survey questions put forward at www.survsoft.com/surv.php?s=35101&k=528-0-87187

Vanessa continued to chair the workshop as a lively discussion between the delegates and presenters began. Questions, answers and comments are detailed below.

Vanessa asked Ian Dowman to summarise and close the discussion. Ian thanked all representatives in the workshop for their pledged support to the development of the GI Knowledge portal. He also thanked the contribution made with regard to vital questions and issues that were raised by the group.

The way forward for the GI Knowledge Portal is to turn the pledges of support into actions!

Questions & comments	Answers & comments
Fraser Taylor (Canada): Expressed his support of the development of the portal through the provision of training. He also impressed upon those in attendance that concrete action was now required beyond talk.	Vanessa: Welcomed the support from the United Nations Geo Information Working Group in their commitment to the development of spatial data and the portal.
Dietmar Grünreich (Germany): Raised the point that there were five communities currently established with the same goal and questioned as to whether there was currently a specific link.	Vanessa: Informed the delegates that there is currently no formal link between portals as data specification is yet to be finalised Gina Weir-Smith: Informed the workshop that AGRIN was working closely with the continent.
Vanessa drew the discussion back to a question of great relevance to the development of the portal – What do people want from the GI Knowledge Portal?	Bryson Morebodi (Botswana): Supports the portal as a small developing country that could find many uses such as gathering information on previous experience of contributors. However he felt that they would like to publish information but fear that this would be limited to advertising.

<p>Sook Yee Loh (Singapore): Raised the issue that there may be potential for information overload and supports a summary being made available on the portal.</p>	<p>A representative from Mongolia: Expressed that it would be a valuable tool with regard to human resources. They would envisage using the portal to gain expert help instead of expensive consultancy.</p> <p>Vanessa: People may also be available on an exchange basis benefiting both parties involved.</p> <p>Ian: Requests for information would be valuable to the development of the portal. This could then be distributed through a message board or via email.</p> <p>Harlan: There is potential to index blogs to allow easy access.</p> <p>Finland also showed support and are particularly interested in the exchange of staff.</p> <p>Maria Ovdii (Moldova): Reported on the GI portal currently under development in Moldova. Maria confirmed to Vanessa that if there were documents available from the UK this would prove very beneficial in their development.</p> <p>Vanessa: Agreed and reiterated that quality and editorial control will be key.</p> <p>Harlan: Gave further assurance that each document uploaded would be licensed to the contributor and metadata must be included.</p>
<p>Representatives from Croatia were partly satisfied yet still had issues to be addressed. In agreeing that information should be shared there was a concern that in meeting standards and regulations the</p>	

information would be out of date before it was published.	
Jean Dotse (Ghana) endorsed the need to keep data up-to-date and posed that the portal would be a better way of doing this rather than sending various versions via email	
A further very important point was raised by Croatia, in that in order for the GI community to survive education must begin with the young people of the country.	Harlan: Urged delegates to look at material on the portal classified under education to source material for teaching GI.
Adam Iwaniak (Poland): Vocalised his support of the benefits associated with sharing information through the portal.	
Norwegian representatives raised the importance of the role the portal would play in finding the correct contact information, vital to the GI community.	<p>Dorine Burmanje (The Netherlands): Reinforced this point by emphasising that building a network and a community was essential. However, Dorine also drew attention to the danger of poor quality information being shared if the portal was not kept up-to-date.</p> <p>Chris Pigram (Australia): Voiced support for the portal and furthermore would provide links to the state and territory information.</p>
Joseph Kagiri Mathenge (Kenya): Informed the workshop that Kenya was now developing standards.	