

Nationwide Development of High Quality, Publicly Accessible Geospatial Data

Every organization needs high quality data to do its job. Most agencies would like better, more complete and accurate data than they currently have, to serve their needs. Some agencies have and use better data than others. This has created a patchwork of database stewards with various degrees of quality. Inconsistent government services and decisions may result from use of such data patchworks.

Inconsistent public safety and a lower potential for economic growth are two implications of the problem posed by a lack of consistent, high quality, publicly accessible geospatial data. The Federal Geographic Data Committee's National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) plan is one significant effort to remedy this problem on a national scale. One significant obstacle is the diversity of public records laws among the states. Many states require government data to be open and freely available, yet some allow fees and licensing restrictions that limit public access to public data. URISA will join with other professional organizations to campaign for more consistent and open public accessibility to government data. Part of the solution is to show public agencies how open data policies serve them better financially than sales and licensing.

In support of the NSDI, the National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) has developed a strategic framework "road map" to encourage coordination by federal, state, regional, local and private stakeholders to pool resources and share data. Many of URISA's members participate in NSDI development activities as well. Some of URISA's chapters have organized regional councils and data sharing consortia to enable diverse public agencies that need the same geospatial data to share and maintain it. URISA will augment and promote these ad hoc efforts with the publication of "best practices" experience from successful participants, similar to NSGIC's document on Geospatial Data Sharing Guidelines for Best Practices which the URISA Board endorsed as a valuable reference (Nov 2013).

The FGDC has led several Federal government efforts to create a national geospatial data and metadata repository (the latest is <http://www.geoplatform.gov>). Many states and regional consortia have created similar "geodata portals" for their constituent areas. URISA members have participated in these efforts. URISA will provide the organizational initiative that can develop "best practice" methods and tools to better coordinate and advance these efforts.

Geodetic Control is the NSDI "Framework Data" theme that is intended to register mapped objects on a layer and align the geospatial layers **to achieve consistent accuracy** within geographic databases. Too few GIS professionals are aware of, or understand, the technical nature of geodetic control and survey control points which are used to accurately register individual geodata layers. URISA will encourage greater collaboration with geodesists and surveyors to foster this understanding, and to develop methods to align multi-layer geodatabases.

URISA strongly supports, and encourages all geospatial professionals to support, the following actions:

- a) Promote development of URISA's Geospatial Capability Maturity Assessment to measure government performance
 - Agencies must have a way to measure their progress toward a level of maturity which contributes to the National Spatial Data Infrastructure
- b) Support and encourage development of a shared geospatial data infrastructure "For the Nation"
 - All government agencies should be adequately resourced to contribute to this shared infrastructure and should be mandated to follow appropriate standards and processes
- c) Support and encourage development of policies and legal frameworks for sharing geospatial data
 - Additional laws and policies are needed to require and support government agencies' sharing of geospatial data consistently
 - Promote these ideas with other organizations, including the Coalition of Geospatial Organizations' as part of its emerging Data Sharing Initiative
- d) Support and encourage formation of "Collaboration Infrastructures" (regional councils, data-sharing consortia)
 - Such associations can enable individual government and private agencies in geographic regions to communicate, cooperate, collaborate, coordinate and share the creation, maintenance, and use of geospatial data
- e) Support and encourage the development of central repositories of geospatial data and metadata
 - Promote the compilation of geospatial data by public and private agencies for free and open distribution to the general public
- f) Support and encourage development of high accuracy geospatial data
 - Promote consistent locational alignment and well-documented accuracy in geospatial databases
 - Promote registration linkage to authoritative geodetic control within geospatial databases
 - Promote collaboration among GIS professionals and surveyors, geodesists, and their professional organizations



Fostering Excellence in GIS

www.URISA.org