

Report of the Geospatial Data Access Committee for 2008/09

Geospatial Data Access Committee members for this past year were Trudy Bodak, Kathleen Matthews, Richard Pinnell, and Ann Smith.

This is a new standing committee, reporting to the President, which was struck by the ACMLA Executive in March 2008 and given a preliminary mandate to explore opportunities for access to geospatial data; software and other resources and to negotiate with providers the necessary terms and conditions for national consortia arrangements. The committee's first order of business was to establish a membership (completed in September) and to further revise and develop its mandate, in consultation with the President (completed in November). The overarching terms of reference for this committee are as follows, with more detail provided in a document on the ACMLA website: http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/assoc/acml/geospatial_committee.pdf

This ACMLA Committee is mandated to seek out, on behalf of Canadian post secondary academic institutions, opportunities for access to significant, national-level Canadian and global geospatial data resources. For significant data resources that are not free the committee attempts to organize a partnering approach and negotiates for consortial license agreements that offer acceptable conditions of use at reasonable cost. The committee is also mandated to explore opportunities for access to significant GIS-related software of broad and continuing interest to Canadian post secondary academic institutions.

The Committee next attempted to identify candidate datasets on which it could “cut its teeth.” These were narrowed to include the following diverse products: ATIC SPOT imagery, SimplyMap and/or PCensus, and Canadian bathymetric data (or Canadian nautical charts).

Negotiations with Eric Kokko, President and CEO, ATIC - Alberta Terrestrial Imaging Center are ongoing. ATIC's first proposal was the creation of a consortium of colleges and universities which would collectively raise the consortial fee based on ATIC's break even. The fee suggested was higher than the Committee felt was feasible. Mr Kokko is now developing alternative funding models to put high quality SPOT imagery into the hands of the Canadian research community. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of SimplyMap versus PCensus, based on company literature and on product demonstrations at OLA and other venues. The Committee is currently leaning towards SimplyMap but has yet to investigate funding models for making this product available to interested members of the academic community. In April the members of the Committee, in consultation with ACMLA folks with an interest in electronic nautical charts—Lori Sugden, James Boxall, Dan Duda, Alberta Auringer Wood, and others—reviewed the efforts that were made in the past to obtain access to these data under reasonable terms of use and at reasonable cost. To make further progress it may be necessary for ACMLA, perhaps working with CCA, to escalate the dialogue and negotiations to the Deputy Ministerial level.

The Committee had success in March acquiring geospatial data files from Elections Canada with reasonable use restrictions (i.e., licensing conditions) and at no charge to the academic community. These are the polling division polygon and point boundary files for the 38th, 39th,

and 40th General Elections for all of Canada in shapefile format. The boundaries for the 39th GE (held in 2006) were distributed to members across Canada in March/April. For those who have not yet received these data and would like to do so, please contact the Committee Chair.

In September, the Committee learned that Gay Lepkey, Publishing and Depository Services, Public Works and Government Services Canada was planning to visit selected Canadian universities to discuss proposed changes to the Agreement which defines the Depository Services Program under which designated libraries may receive government publications. The Committee fielded questions and concerns from the membership about this Agreement-in-progress, and then sought responses from Mr Lepkey. Some of the questions related to the details associated with full versus selective depository status. Others folks had concerns about not receiving the Geological Survey's A map series in digital format and still others had suggestions for maps and other cartographic products they would like to receive through the Depository Services Program. Gay Lepkey's responses were posted on Carta by the Committee Chair on 24 September. At time of writing this Committee report, the revised Agreement is being distributed to Chief Librarians across Canada although the document seems to focus on government publications other than maps; watch for another agreement relating to maps and other cartographic products.

Another of the Committee's responsibilities is: *In consultation with the ACMLA Board of Directors, to assist in the search to find members who are willing and qualified to represent ACMLA on national-level geodata access working groups and advisory bodies such as, for example, the Depository Services Program Library Advisory Committee.* The Geospatial Data Committee is pleased to report that David Jones, incoming member of the DSP Advisory Committee, has recently agreed to represent the interests of ACMLA while serving on this Advisory Committee. We are also pleased to report that Barbara Znamirovski, a long-standing member of the DLI External Advisory Committee, has agreed to assist ACMLA in furthering communication between DLI and ACMLA. Our thanks to David and Barbara for agreeing to provide such invaluable liaison services.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Pinnell, Chair
ACMLA Geospatial Data Access Committee
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