

Geoconnections Report, May 26, 2004

The Geoconnections mandate is to make Canada's geo-information accessible on the Internet. Geoconnections accomplishes this through the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure which supports the management of national economic and social priorities such as the environment, health, disaster management, community, government service, transportation, business development and others

Geoconnections' objectives are to i) increase the amount of geospatial data, information and services available on the Internet ii) ease data integration issues and data standardization iii) expand the use and application of geo-info iv) promote the development of innovative technology v) simplify the conditions for geo-info use and resale

Geoconnections includes i) Discovery portal ii) Geobase iii) Geogratis with a total of 54 online dynamic services in 2004 compared to 23 in 2003, 1280 data catalogues in 2004, a 12 % increase over 2003

Geoconnections has seen over 40,000 user sessions monthly this year to the Discovery Portal and 45,000 to the Geobase site.

Geoconnections wins Apex award

Spring of 2004, Geoconnections' Earth Science Sector's Geobase won the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada Apex Award for Leadership in Service Innovation. Geoconnections, or an associated body has won the award for a third year in a row. This year's award recognized the federal, provincial and territorial team associated with the GeoBase

Portal - www.geobase.ca which is hosted and managed by the Earth Sciences Sector. Funding was provided by federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as GeoConnections. ESS was also the winner of the 2003 APEX Award for the innovative service delivery for the Mapping for Visually Impaired website.

What was new in 2004

- The National Road Network data is to be completed by 2005
- The next step will be to complete coverages of the other 6 themes for all of Canada

Geoconnections renewal

Geoconnections is in its last year of its mandate. Work is underway to try and get renewal funding. It is not clear what to expect.

A Hickling Arthurs Low study of Geoconnections's GeoBase and the Framework Data evaluating the programs found that the Canadian public felt the governance of the programs overly complex and poorly understood. There is also confusion among parts of the programs such as GeoBase, GeoConnections, GC Access, the National Atlas etc. The same study stated that there is strong support in Canada for the idea of free or low-cost data distribution but that there is also a big desire to have higher resolution data included in the programs.

Overall the study found that GeoBase contributes to the building a culture of collaboration among partners and that Geobase was successful in bringing together disparate federal and provincial datasets. There are however many difficulties in future provincial government collaboration projects for a variety of reasons that

include funding issues, lack of resources, know-how, difficulties in participating in federal programs, etc.

The study also found that there is strong demand in Canada for Geobase to include hydrographic data on the Internet.

The study expressed that the support for the program is strong but there is no firm financial commitment beyond 2004-2005 for Geoconnections.

It is still early but the study pointed to anticipated benefits of the program and the increased use of geospatial information. The obvious are that data is now more accessible and less expensive but that there is little evidence of private sector capacity building.

The recommendations of the study are that the CCOG fund the preparation of a new five year strategy and operational plan for GeoBase.

Respectfully submitted by:

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President
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