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SOME REMARKS ON GLOSSARY NO. 330 - TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY

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SOME REMARKS ON GLOSSARY No. 330 - TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY

Even at this relatively late stage in the production of Glossary No. 330 - "Technical Terminology Employed in the Standardization of Geographical Names", some remarks may not be out of place. These concern Uniformity, Precision, Redundancy and Completeness of the list of terms, including later additions proposed at the 12th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (see e.g. Working Paper No. 14).

1. Uniformity of definitions.

This refers to the definitions of a given term in the various languages of the Glossary. As far as possible, definitions should be uniform. Thus, No. 158, Toponym, is defined in English as a name applied to a topographic feature. In French and Arabic, however, it includes names on other planets (French) or stars (Arabic).

2. Precision of the definitions.

The addition of some cartographic and/or geographical terms to the Glossary is welcome, but some of the definitions proposed lack in precision. Below are some examples:

- Coordonnée géographique. This defines a line, not a point as stated; only a pair of coordinates defines a point.
- Parallel. This is not, as proposed, a section between a plane perpendicular to the axis of rotation and the surface of the earth, but between the former and the surface of the representative spheroid, usually an ellipsoid of rotation.
- Meridian. Because of the necessary correction to the definition of "Parallel", the substitution of "representative spheroid" to "earth" is preferable at least for the sake of uniformity.
- Projection, cartographic. "Curved surface" should be replaced by "a spheroid representing the earth or celestial body". The projection of any 3-dimensional (curved) surface is not - with the above exception - a cartographic projection.
- No. 164, Translation. This should read "...converting...into the words of another language."

3. Redundancy.

The Glossary and the additions thereto include several terms which are either so well-known as to need no definition in a work of the type dealt with here, or else are so specific to certain branches of linguistics that they need none, either. It would appear that recommending a good dictionary of linguistics and phonetics can substitute for any missing terms in these fields, while a good geographical glossary or dictionary can be consulted on terms in this discipline. Again, some examples follow.

- Vowel. This is so general a term that if a person does not know its meaning, she or he can hardly be considered fit to deal with problems of toponymy.
- Equator. Again, this is so well known that it requires no definition in the present context.
- Patronym. This term is specific to the field of anthroponymy and can be dispensed with.

4. Completeness of the list.

In contrast to the objection of redundancy, there seems to be missing a body of terms associated with the modern aspects and

usage of toponymy. Some examples of terms - for which full definitions can be supplied if it is decided to incorporate them into the Glossary - are:

- Record
- File
- Data base
- Data base, digital toponymic
- Noise, graphic (this, in English at least, is preferable to cacography, proposed in French).
- Printer, dot matrix
- Address
- Menu, computer
- Raster mode,
- Vector mode

The term "Format", appearing as No. 52 in the Glossary, today has a new meaning in Computerese, the definition of which is indispensable in a modern list of technical terms.

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