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Toponymic education

The UNGEGN Advanced Toponymy Manual
Submitted by the UNGEGN Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy**

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The UNGEGN Advanced toponymy manual

Introduction

In New York, at the tenth UN conference on the standardization of geographical names in 2012, a working paper was submitted (E/CONF.101/30, titled Advanced Toponymy Courses) on behalf of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, that was meant as a discussion paper for that working group. The paper analysed the contents of current toponymy courses offered by the WG; these consisted of introduction to the terminology, the naming process, functions of geographical names, their collection through fieldwork and their processing, and the organisational framework for standardizing them. In a digital environment, the digital creation and population of toponymic databases has been part of such basic courses, as was the production of derived documents like gazetteers. The paper also signalled the changes in content of those basic courses since their first implementation in 1982. Since 2002, in a number of more atypical courses, elements were added that could be regarded as belonging to a more advanced type of course. Such elements were for instance: collecting names from indigenous/minority group cultures, legal aspects, multiple naming, sea area naming, the history of place names, data audits between different organisations with names databases, the functioning of name board meetings and the establishment of naming principles, and handling contacts with the media. Toponymic research, and its methodologies were dealt with, as was digital label placement, and regional initiatives like the small island naming programme in Indonesia.

Apart from these additional advanced themes the framework of the courses themselves changed as well: we started now from the need for standardized geographical names as part of the national geospatial data structure and dealt for the first time also with the actual management of national names programmes. Ours were not the only courses to adapt to the times, we could see a similar development for the PAIGH toponymy courses given in Latin America. The changing role of the geographical names layer was an issue there as well. As UN-GGIM was starting up in 2011, we also then added the bringing in agreement of statistical and topographical toponymy.

Putting all these new, more advanced elements together we found that they could be grouped under the following headings:

- Toponymic research
- Management and organizational issues,
- Special and regional applications
- Cultural aspects
- Cartographic issues
- Database and spatial data infrastructure issues
- Communication issues.

On the basis of these new elements we had identified and had included on an ad-hoc basis in our courses since 2002, we devised a programme for an advanced toponymy course for discussion at the 10th conference, and for implementation at the next toponymy course (to be held in Yogyakarta in 2013) or at one of the international cartographic training institutes such as ITC\(^1\), RCMRD\(^2\) or RECTAS\(^3\). However, we found, both at the conference and at the next course in Indonesia, that

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\(^1\) Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente (ITC), Enschede, The Netherlands

\(^2\) Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), Nairobi, Kenia

\(^3\) Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys, Ile Ife, Nigeria
delegates and local course organizers preferred the basic course. Neither were we able to interest the regional international training institutes to implement such an advanced course.

Perhaps we could have considered this outcome ourselves: for an advanced toponymy course the potential number of participants would be even smaller than for a more basic course. So, we turned around and changed our plans. In 2013 the initiative was taken to produce an UNGEGN toponymy manual with advanced resource material for those working on the standardization of geographical names. We started to work on a project that still would bring all the teaching material planned within the reach of those targeted, but now in the form of an advanced manual with chapters that could be downloaded.

Production

A team of reviewers was constituted in 2014, consisting of Helen Kerfoot (Canada), Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu (Germany) and Ferjan Ormeling (Netherlands). It became their task to redirect the focus or contents of the chapters, if necessary, and to avoid overlap or gaps. They drew up the specifications for the layout and the letter type style and size. As the manual was to be in digital form, primary concern was that the pages should be easily readable on the monitor screen, and that is why it was decided to have a landscape format, with three text columns, while the illustrations would be wrapped in the text, but could extend over 1, 2 or 3 columns.

Moreover, participants had the opportunity of doing exercises in looking up data fields, geo-referencing, in matching maps, identifying writing systems, in name transcription, the creation of a names data base, producing a geographical names index, solving editorial issues and adopting a map to a new denomination.

3.5 How we hope the advanced manual will be used

As was done for this chapter, all chapters in this advanced toponymy manual will start with a statement on its objective and on the skills the readers will have after they have made themselves familiar with the chapter’s contents. The target audience for the Advanced Toponymy Manual consists of those working in national names boards and in names collecting and processing programmes.

The nature of the texts will not be too scientific—the use of references is advocated so that the readers will be referred to relevant texts, preferably online, as it will be difficult for many readers to access libraries where

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Figure 1 Sample page from Chapter 2 of the Advanced manual showing the layout.

A first sample chapter was produced (chapter 2, which showed the preferred layout in the landscape format with three columns, with Calibri size 9 text, aligned at left only, the same for the captions of the illustrations (for each chapter the figure numbers started with Figure n-1), Calibri size 12 bold for
Chapter titles (lower case), size 11 for author’s names and Calibri size 10 bold subtitles. If unavoidable, endnotes could be inserted. References would be indicated according to the Oxford system, but with the year of publication in brackets after the author’s name and each entry preceded by a hyphen. The sample chapter also contained a description of the various sections the chapters belonged to, with a statement of their aims and objectives and preferred contents.

This sample chapter was made available to the authors who had volunteered to contribute a chapter at or after the 28th UNGEGN session in New York. A deadline was set for them but, as the whole project operated on a volunteer basis, this deadline did not help the reviewers much, and most of the chapters had to be reviewed and processed in 2017 just before the 11th conference.

The UNGEGN secretariat was asked to facilitate the uploading of the manual to the UNGEGN website prior to the conference, in such a way that both individual chapters and the whole manual could be freely downloaded. A cover was designed by the UN graphics department, so that by clicking this image the manual could be accessed from the working group’s section on the UNGEGN website.

**Contents of the UNGEGN ADVANCED TOPOONYMY MANUAL**

As not all chapters promised materialised, the reviewers had to adapt the original subdivision of 15 sections and dropped the section on the need for standardised geographical names for emergency mapping, administration and development, which also was intended to deal with the use of standardised names in real estate websites and in searching for hotel accommodation as more practical examples of the benefits of names standardization. It was expected these chapters could easily be added later.

Other chapters originally planned, but not realised as yet, are:

- Matching statistical area names and topographic names
- Integration of crowd sourced/volunteered geographic information
- Open street mapping and geographical names
- The small islands names project in Indonesia
- Onomastics and terminology
- Digital/automatic place name labelling

The status quo prior to the 11th conference is:

**Section 1: General /strategic issues**

1-The need for standardized geographical names (Helen Kerfoot)
2-Subject matter dealt with in the basic Toponymy webcourse (Ferjan Ormeling)

**Section 2 Management of a national names programme:**

3- Maintaining and publishing the geographical names database (Pier-G. Zaccheddu)
4- Management of the Swiss national names programme (Alfred Guth)
5- The Canadian Geographical Names Data Base – an example of a national system combining data from different jurisdictions (Helen Kerfoot, Kristina Kwiatkowski, Heather Ross)

**Section 3 Different topical applications**

6-Geographical names for hydrographic charts (Sylvia Spohn)
7-Geographical names for tourist maps (Roman Stani-Fertl)
8-Urban street naming: How to plan an urban street name programme (Brahim Atoui)

Section 4 Regional and global initiatives
9-Building the New Zealand Gazetteer (Wendy Shaw)
10-World names database UN (Helen Kerfoot)
11-Geonames.org (Mark Wick)

Section 5 Extending policy work and the progress of toponymic names databases
12-Standardization of names for statistical enumeration areas (Ana Resende)
13-Integration of crowd-sourced information / volunteered geographic information (VGI) (Annette Törensjö) (still expected)

Section 6 Technical issues - Data bases and pronunciation
14-Technical issues – database management (Pier-G. Zaccheddu)
15-Requirements for school atlas names database (Tjeerd Tichelaar)
16-Pronunciation: best practices for its recording (Tjeerd Tichelaar)

Section 7 Technical issues 2 - Web services
17-Web services and applications - open source vs commercial options: (Pier-G. Zaccheddu)
18-Visualizing names databases (Pier-G. Zaccheddu)
19-Working with GeoNyms - a desktop application (Yoseph Mekasha) (still expected)
20- Data repository (Teemu Leskinen)

Section 8: Websites:
21-Evaluation of current web services and applications (Ferjan Ormeling)
22-Evaluation of current names servers (Ferjan Ormeling)

Section 9: Cultural aspects
23-Place names as cultural heritage (Botolv Helleland)
24-History of place names, street names (Tjeerd Tichelaar)
25-Collecting indigenous names (Bill Watt) (still expected)
26-Place names and cultural heritage in an archipelagic country (M+A Lauder)

Section 10: Toponymic research and documentation
27-Etymology and the historic study of place names (Isolde Hausner)
28-Study of linguistic and toponymic sources (Hubert Bergmann)

Section 11: Cartographic aspects: paper and digital map series
29-Updating names sheets and Assessing optimal names density for map sheets (Helmut Zierhut)
30-Dealing with area names on adjoining map sheets; multiple naming (Helmut Zierhut)

Section 12: Special training for contacts with the media and the public
31-Media cartography (Ferjan Ormeling)
32-Producing media maps exercise (Ferjan Ormeling)
33-Fieldwork Interviews (Elisabeth Calvarin)
Vote of thanks

The working group thanks those experts that volunteered chapters and were able to finish them in time:

Brahim Atoui - Algeria
Hubert Bergmann - Austria
Elisabeth Calvarin - France
Alfred Guth - Switzerland
Isolde Hausner - Austria
Botolv Helleland - Norway
Helen Kerfoot - Canada
Kristina Kwiatkowski - Canada
Mia Lauder - Indonesia
Allan Lauder - Indonesia
Teemu Leskinen - Finland
Ferjan Ormeling - Netherlands
Ana Resende - Brazil
Heather Ross - Canada
Wendy Shaw - New Zealand
Sylvia Spohn - Germany
Roman Stani - Fertl - Austria
Tjeerd Tichelaar - Netherlands
Mark Wick - Switzerland
Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu - Germany
Helmut Zierhut - Austria