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STANDARDIZATION IN MULTILINGUAL AREAS

A bilingual 1 : 50 000 series

(Submitted by Ireland)

A bilingual 1 : 50 000 series

In *Toponymic Guidelines for Cartography : Ireland 1994*, paragraph 3.1.2., it is stated that the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) was currently establishing a new medium- and small-scale structured database derived from aerial photography and other imagery. From this database it was planned to produce a series of 71 (seventy one) sheets at scale 1 : 50 000. This series, entitled *Discovery Series / Sraith Eolais*, is now in production and to date (July 1996) 38 (thirty eight) sheets have been published. (The actual numbering of the sheets is within the range 1 to 89 and integrates with the numbering of the series of 18 (eighteen) sheets at the same scale which has already been produced by the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) and which ranges from 4 to 29. Thus a composite numbered series at 1 : 50 000 is available for the whole island of Ireland. However, the two component series are very different in appearance, the OSI series being compiled from a digital database.

The bilingual title of this OSI series is due more to State policy than to the the multilingual ethos which currently may be observed to varying degrees in many parts of Europe. In some jurisdictions alternative names, or name-forms, in non-official languages are permitted as cultural features only. In Ireland both the English language and the Irish language are official languages and bilingualism is the policy of the State (*Toponymic Guidelines* 1.1). However, as English is the dominant language, and was the established language in Irish mapping before the State was founded in 1922, there are practical difficulties involved in efforts to achieve evenly-balanced bilinguality as regards the names on maps. Furthermore, any attempt at bilinguality requires constant attention and vigilance in order to avoid unwitting reversion to the unilingual approach.

This series of maps is intended as a popular and user-friendly aid and was commenced in 1989 by the production of a number of preliminary sheets which were quite different in appearance from the present sheets. There was continuous modification from the beginning and by 1993 the present format had been established. English is the basic language of the legend, that is, of the explanatory text on the margin outside the frame of the map-sheet. Taking the English text as 100%, equivalent Irish text represents about 80% of the English. The broader European dimension is acknowledged by the provision of French- and German-language equivalents of about 60% of the English text.

As regards bilingual naming this series is not uniform. In fact it is obvious that the map is really an English-language map which is moving in the direction of bilingual naming. The major social and geographic features are named in both languages on the map but on no sheet so far is the naming totally bilingual.

Practical difficulties of bilingual naming

The basic rural administrative division, the townland, has been stabilized on mapping since the boundaries were delineated on the 1833-45 series at the scale 1 : 10 560, which is six inches to one mile. The size of the townland ranges in extent from 0.5 hectares to 1750 hectares, thus giving formidable variety. Usually the smaller units tend to be adjacent to other small units in areas which were densely populated at the time of the first mapping. Similarly the larger units usually occur in groups in areas which were sparsely populated.

It is possible to place a high percentage, perhaps 90%, of these townland names on the map at the scale 1 : 50 000 in the existing official English-language forms without undue detriment to the appearance and legibility of the map. However, as stated above, the number of townland names which appear in Irish as well as English varies greatly from sheet to sheet at present, depending on whether the area in question is officially an Irish-speaking one, on whether the forms of the Irish names are already determined, and on the physical nature of the area.

A variety of type-styles is used in displaying the names, and the two languages are distinguished generally by the use of upright for English and italic (inclined to the right) for Irish.

The Irish forms of the names are usually meaningful language and therefore contain more letters than the normally opaque English forms. This tends to create difficulties, whether real or imaginary, in placement of names in two languages on maps which, by tradition, have an English-language names-base.

The names-base

The original names-base of the Ordnance Survey is that of the cartography inherited when the modern Irish State was established in 1922. These standardized English-language forms of the names first appeared on the maps which the Ordnance Survey began to publish in 1833. They were used in the *Report of the Census of 1841*, published in 1843. Since then these forms have been the official English-language forms used by the public administration. However, the majority of the names originated in the Irish language, usually many centuries before the Ordnance Survey's anglicized forms. It is necessary, therefore, to decide the best Irish-language forms of the names and this is done through linguistic and historical research. This work is, of its nature, slow and has not yet been completed (*Toponymic Guidelines 2*).

Therefore, it is the Irish-language name-forms which must be added to the names-base, and to the map, in order to make it possible to achieve bilinguality in keeping with the official policy. Any imbalance on the map at present can be adjusted when revision takes place after completion of the series which is scheduled for 1999.

The Ordnance Survey of Ireland will gladly send sample sheets of this series on request to any member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Equally OSI would be pleased to receive sample sheets of any multilingual series.

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