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Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda:
Activities relating to the Working Group on Training
Courses in Toponymy

<u>**Internet-based Toponymy Course**</u>
<u>**(Translation of "Cours de toponymie sur Internet")**</u>

Prepared by the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, Canada.

Internet-based Toponymy Course

The idea for a toponymy course on the Internet stems from a resolution by the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which promotes toponymic management training. The offering of such a course in the French language is in keeping with the functions of the French-speaking Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), which first introduced the notion at its 20th session in New York, and included the initiative in its program of work for 2002-2007.

The project is also consistent with the collaborative protocol first established between the Commission de toponymie du Québec, Canada, and the Commission nationale de toponymie de France in 1994, and renewed in 2001. One of the provisions of this agreement calls for the development of common training, awareness, and introductory and development programs for the countries of the Francophonie.

Because training sessions are very expensive to organize and registration fees are a deterrent to participation for several countries of the Francophonie, the idea of making material available on the Web was particularly appealing. Consequently, in 2003-2004, the Commission de toponymie du Québec produced the first draft of an online course by adapting for the Web the notes for an introductory toponymy course given by Henri Dorion at Laval University (Quebec, Canada). Mr. Dorion, a geographer and toponymist, is also a distinguished member and past President of UNGEGN.

The purpose of this exercise was to lay the necessary groundwork for the design of a French-language Internet site on toponymy. The content was made available on the Web in the spring of 2004 and was the topic of a presentation at the 22nd UNGEGN session, held in New York in April 2004. The adaptation was produced by Myriam Hallé, a geographer at the Commission de toponymie du Québec.

Once this first step was completed, it soon proved necessary to add content that would have the potential of reaching an international audience, and to adapt that content to a more user-friendly Web format, while enhancing it with multimedia features. Therefore, in designing the second phase of the project, begun in February 2005, the Commission de toponymie du Québec took advantage of a grant from the Quebec Department of International Relations to invite a visiting French toponymist, Elisabeth Calvarin, to team with Mr. Dorion. Ms. Calvarin is a toponymist at the Institut géographique national (IGN) and rapporteur for the Commission nationale de toponymie de France. Like Mr. Dorion, she is also a member of UNGEGN and teaches a toponymy course at the IGN's École nationale des sciences géographiques.

The grant also made it possible to use the services of a Web site design company to develop an online course prototype for use in efforts to attract funding to continue the project.

During Ms. Calvarin's visit, the two experts agreed not to use the entire contents of their respective courses, but to select instead the most essential and practical components, supported by numerous attractive links.

After an introduction to the various aspects of the science of toponymy (linguistic, geographical, historical, political), the course concentrates on the problems involved in toponymic management at the national and international levels, and on the principles, rules and criteria of and the legal and administrative structures conducive to effective toponymic management.

In addition, it was decided to focus the course on the science of toponymy from the linguistic, geographical, historical and political perspectives, and then address questions pertaining to toponymic management at the national and international levels. And last January, the members of the French-speaking Division were consulted about their training needs.

Mr. Dorion and Ms. Calvarin designed a plan and developed an outline for the course and its chapters, sharing the content, the examples and supporting documentation (bibliographies, hyperlinks, examples, lists, etc.). When they consulted the members of the French-speaking Division, they also invited them to submit toponymic examples that might enhance the topics dealt with, thereby creating a forum for participation as well as adding to the international dimension of the course.

At this stage, the course design is simple and easily accessible. The prototype we are presenting consists of four screen displays, accompanied by related information and organized according to the navigation approach selected for the project as a whole. It is intended to be simple, flexible, functional and easy to use. It is also efficient in terms of the resources needed to use it and the time required for users to access the information they are seeking.

Once fully developed, the site should consist of some thirty screen displays presenting a array of complementary information that can be accessed via hot buttons. The design of the site will allow for the fact that it is intended to be useful to all countries of the Francophonie.

Development of the course will begin in the coming year, with the collaboration of the two authors, the input of toponymists in the French-speaking Division, and the support of the Commission de toponymie du Québec, the Commission nationale de toponymie (CNT) and the Commission de toponymie of the Institut géographique national.

The interactive computer translation will be made possible by financing from the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie. Lastly, it should be noted that the site will be hosted by the Commission de toponymie du Québec and will be accessible from the Web site of the French-speaking Division of UNGEGN at <http://www.divisionfrancophone.org/Formation/index.htm>.

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