

**Twenty-ninth session
Bangkok, Thailand, 25 – 29 April 2016**

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

**Report of the Liaison officer with the
Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH)**

Submitted by PAIGH*

* Prepared by Roger L. Payne, Chairman, Working Group on Geographical Names, Cartographic Commission, PAIGH

Overview (course presentation)

The José Joaquín Hungría Morell Geographic Names Course offered under the auspices of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) was not presented in 2015 although there is a possibility of such an offering in 2016. The importance of applied toponymy is evident worldwide, and has been noted to be essential in local, regional, and national planning as well as emergency response and preparedness, national security, environmental analysis, and a variety of similar applications. In short, standardization of geographic names is a major factor in support of a nation's spatial data infrastructure. The two-week course is designed to provide an introduction and basis for national standardization of geographic names and a program of applied toponymy. The first week is predominately lecture and addresses various aspects of applied toponymy, and concentrates heavily upon all requirements involved in establishing a program of national standardization, while exploring conventional and alternate methods of achieving this goal.

Normally, there is a comprehensive field exercise offering students the opportunity of actual data gathering, processing, and analyzing in accordance with established toponymic field procedures. The second week of the course is devoted to a workshop in automated data processing where the student designs databases and files, as well as acquires the ability to retrieve and analyze toponymic data in a microprocessing environment. Finally, there is an exercise where a names staff interacts with a mock national names authority in applying principles and policies of standardization.

The course offerings in 2013 and 2014 were altered considerably for a variety of reasons. Instead of the traditional two-week period the course has been shortened to one week (realizing considerable savings in resources) as a result of the advanced status of the situation of applied toponymy in most member States. Further, the module on methods of establishing a program of national standardization is usually altered considerably because such a program is established in varying forms in most member States and usually functioning accordingly. The focus of this module then has been redirected to have the students examine the existing committee's structure, secretariat, and policies; and then to make presentations regarding the nature of the administrative organization and a complete analysis of the existing policies based upon lecture and exchange of ideas and analyses. The field exercise has also been eliminated in this course (unless requested directly) because most member States have an active, well-developed, and well-established program of field collection and verification although there is a designed and meaningful exchange between the students and instructors regarding methodology and experience in field work.

Additionally, the course now focuses on requirements as well as design and development of a national automated system for the national geographic names program since most member States are in various phases of development of such an automated system.

As ever, while the course has evolved into a well-structured set of seven interrelated modules, with specific adjustment indicates that the course continues to be an excellent

forum for sharing common problems and defining solutions. The flexibility in the curriculum of the course continues to be a major asset to advancing programs of national name standardization and the overall implementation of applied toponymy in support of national mapping programs and in support of national spatial data infrastructure. Importantly, differences and commonalities between and among various agencies are normally discussed and solutions for optimization of effort and resources are offered.

As part of the course now, the changing role of the name layer (one of the eight identified essential layers of a national digital map program) in a national spatial data environment, and the increasing requirements for digital mapping, both general and thematic, are examined and discussed with a meaningful exchange.

As part of the discussion of either the existing extensive program of data collection or beginning such a program in preparation for populating the newly developed national names database, techniques of collecting data, extant and otherwise, are examined thoroughly where various techniques are examined with special emphasis on source type, value, and reliability (provenance) .

The future online web course

The Cartographic Commission's Working Group on Geographical Names at the Pan American Institute of Geography & History (PAIGH) has completed its major project of developing more than 100 pages of ancillary explanatory text to accompany the more than 500 PowerPoint slides for the online version of the course. The timetable for implementation has yet to be determined due to uncertainties regarding funding. Certain milestones have been achieved, but the projected completion date has been rescheduled and is not yet able to be announced.

The PAIGH Working Group on Geographical Names expects to have various forms of the training course made available. Specifically, an online version in the near future, and shortened onsite versions concentrating on specific country needs and requirements. The full version of the course can still be made available onsite if necessary and requested. The conventional version of the course will become periodic, have a changed focus, and with special application once the full online version is available. The conventional version is available as the introductory two-week version (as in 2012) or the advanced version of one-week duration (as in 2013 & 2014).

Integrated geographic names data system for the Latin American Community

As we continue to report, the Working Group is most interested in pursuing and even directing or assisting in the establishment and development of an integrated geographic names data system for the Latin American Community to serve as the single authoritative source for users requiring standardized names for use in any project or task and also for toponymic support of national and regional spatial data infrastructures.

Pan American Institute of Geography & History

Chronology of Geographic Names Courses (Applied Toponymy)

Panama City, Panama
April 1987

1988 - no course

Quito, Ecuador
April 1989

Santiago, Chile
November – December 1990

Aguascalientes, Mexico
November – December 1991

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
October – November 1992

Tegucigalpa, Honduras
October – November 1993

1994 - no course

Lima, Peru
June 1995

Asunción, Paraguay
May 1996

La Paz, Bolivia
May 1997

Lima, Peru
August 1998

Guatemala City, Guatemala
July 1999

Asunción, Paraguay
June – July 2000

Bogotá, Colombia
July – August 2001

San Salvador, El Salvador
August 2002

José Joaquín Hungría Morrell Course
(name used for the first time)
Quito, Ecuador
June – July 2003

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
August 2004

Panama City, Panama
August – September 2005

Santiago, Chile
August – September 2006

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
May 2007

Quito, Ecuador
March – April 2008

Madrid, Spain
October 2009

Belize
Scheduled 2010 (not held)

Belize
Scheduled 2011 (not held)

Tegucigalpa, Honduras
February - March 2012

Panama City, Panama
July 2013

Aguascalientes, Mexico
August 2014