

**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

Summary report on the production of an UNEGN Toponymy manual

Submitted by the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy*

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Summary report on the production of an UNGEGN Toponymy manual

In 2013 the initiative was taken to produce an UNGEGN Toponymy manual, to provide advanced resource material for those working on the standardization of geographical names. The texts to be selected were to be regarded as best practices in the collection, processing and dissemination of geographical names. Themes for the various chapters were set, authors were selected, and an editorial committee was composed.

Chapters started coming in from early 2015 onwards, allowing the editorial committee ample time for their editing, translation if necessary, and to attune the various chapters to another. Half the contributions have been received now, and the remainder have to come in before the end of 2016 in order to be able to present the final version of the manual at the 11th UNCSGN conference in New York or Paris. It should be ready by then in a format that would allow for downloading it from the UNGEGN website at the WG Training course in toponymy page.

Report on the production of an UNGEGN Toponymy manual

Since 2013 the WG on training courses in toponymy has been working on the realization of an advanced toponymy manual that would enable those that have followed the basic toponymy webcourse, in English, French or Spanish, to receive more in-depth instruction in the collecting, processing, standardizing of geographical names, in their incorporation in databases, and in their diffusion through web servers or other means, and in their practical applications.

For this manual some 40 chapters were originally planned, that would be edited linguistically and layout-wise in order to give them a consistent outlook. These chapters would then be placed on the UNGEGN website under the heading of the WG on Training Courses in Toponymy, from which they could be downloaded, just as the Webcourse on Toponymy. An editorial team from the Working Group was constituted in 2014, consisting of Helen Kerfoot, Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu and Ferjan Ormeling. It became their task to redirect the focus or contents of the chapters, if necessary, and to avoid overlap or gaps.

Status quo of the planned UNGEGN toponymy manual

Here, for the various sections originally planned, an assessment is given regarding their materialization:

Section 1: General /strategic issues. In this first session we highlight the eminence of the national toponymic database, and its benefits for administration, development, emergency mapping and preserving the cultural heritage, and we check the starting point: knowledge of the matter dealt with in the basic toponymy course: fieldwork, names processing, role of UNGEGN, etc.: The two chapters envisaged here have been completed.

Section 2 Examples of applications of the national names database in emergency mapping, administration and development

Two chapters were planned here, one on National names databases and emergency mapping, with examples from UNSDI, Haiti, another one on the application of a National names database for a tourist activities/hotel reservation application. These chapters did not materialize, however.

Section 3 Management of a national names programme:

Three chapters were envisaged here, one on the finances, administration, legal issues, human resources needed in maintaining and publishing the geographical names, one on the management of the Swiss national names programme, and one on logistics, production time needed, necessary upkeep costs. The contribution from Switzerland has been received, and we are confident to receive the two others as well, eventually in combined form.

Section 4 Regional activities and different applications

We are still hopeful to receive a chapter on Geographical names for hydrographic charts and have received chapters on Geographical names for tourist maps and on Urban Street naming: How to plan an urban street name programme. An exercise on the production of a tourist/road map is being produced.

Section 5 Regional and global initiatives

It is not clear whether a promised description of a project aimed at the naming of small islands in a nearby archipelago, to help their economic development will be delivered. From New Zealand we have received a description of the creation of the New Zealand Gazetteer. We are confident to receive a description of the GeoNames project and from Canada we have a chapter on the UNGEGN world names database.

Section 6 Extending the policy work and the progress of toponymic names databases

In Brazil an IBGE team is working on a chapter on the Standardization of names for statistical enumeration areas as well as a chapter on smoothing the differences between statistical and topographical areal object names. These two are considered key chapters in the integration of data files as promoted by GGIM.

Also in this section a chapter on the Integration of crowd-sourced or volunteered geographic information (VGI) in our names data bases is confidently expected. A chapter on Open Street mapping and geographical names was promised.

*Section 7 Technical issues: database management**

For this section, separate chapters were intended on structure and content of toponymic databases and gazetteers, on Database design & management and on criteria for the selection of Open source versus commercial databases. It may become necessary to amalgamate these chapters, but we are still confident to receive a text.

A chapter on the Requirements for school atlas names database has been received, and from the same author a chapter on best practices for pronunciation recording. The latter may still have to be modified.

Section 8 Technical issues, continued:

Here a contribution was envisaged on the criteria for selecting Open source options versus commercial options for web services and applications, for which chapter we still need an author.

The planned chapter on Publishing names databases in the Google Earth might still arrive, while we have received a good chapter on names models and data repositories, and have been guaranteed by ECA a chapter on working with GeoNyms, a names database programme developed by ECA.

Section 9: Websites: evaluation of current Internet services and applications.

For this section only two chapters were planned, and both of them have been delivered

Section 10: Cultural aspects

A chapter on Place names as cultural heritage has been delivered, while the planned chapters on the History of place names and street names and on Collecting indigenous names are still outstanding.

Section 11: Toponymic research and documentation

A chapter on Etymology and the historic study of place names has been received, as has a Study of linguistic and toponymic sources

Section 12: Cartographic aspects: paper and digital map series

Both a chapter on Updating names sheets and Assessing optimal names density for map sheets and a chapter on Dealing with areal names on adjoining map sheets and multiple naming have been received. We are still looking for authors that may contribute with a chapter on digital place name labelling as developed by soft- and hardware firms in the Geomatics field.

Session 13: Auditing existing place name records

Auditing place name records in order to coordinate toponymic information from different parts of the country, in order to coordinate toponymic information from different survey periods (and therefore collected according to different standards, processes and procedures) or in order to coordinate names records from different national institutions is one of the key areas UNGEGN has to deal with in the future, and we are still hoping to receive a promised contribution in this area.

Section 14 Communication issues.

Here a video showing a role play for a names board meeting was planned. The footage is there, but we are still looking at the technical requirements.

Section 15 Special training for contacts with the media and the public

Here, chapters on Media cartography and on Fieldwork interviews were planned as well as an exercise on producing media maps. All of them have materialised.

Results per 29-2-2016:

Of the 40 intended chapters 20 chapters have been received, if necessary translated, and have been edited. Of the two intended exercises, one has been realized. We are confident that another 7 chapters will also materialize shortly. We are really concerned about 6 chapters, for which we are looking afresh for authors that would be willing to write a 3-4000 words text on either of the following items:

- National names database and emergency mapping
- Application of a national names database for hotel-finding apps
- Open street mapping and the collection of geographical names
- Criteria for selecting open source versus commercial options for web services
- Publishing names data bases in a Google Earth application
- Digital place name labelling

If we would not be able to find texts on these subjects, that really would leave a gap. So we hope potential authors will come forward in Bangkok. Deadline would be the end of December 2016.

Language:

It is hoped the funding can be found to translate the chapters of the manual in other UN languages – in the case of two chapters originally written in French, these could be made available as well.

Distribution

It is expected that the UNGEGN toponymy manual will be made available prior to the 11th UNGSGN by incorporating it in the UNGEGN website, at the Working Group section, to allow for downloading it, either chapter by chapter or as a whole. This kind of distribution would allow for easy updating the material, replacing it by more up-to date or more relevant texts and for extending it in new directions, as dictated by new or newly identified best practices.

The UNGEGN toponymy manual is regarded as a 'living' resource , answering the changing needs of the toponymic community.