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on Geographical Names

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Report of the First Meeting of the  
Working Group on Definitions

9 February 1971

The working group on definitions, consisting of Messrs. Brea, Gall, Howda, Lewis, Meynen, Page, and Sharma, assembled immediately following the fifth session of the Third Meeting of the Group of Experts. Agreement was reached to the effect that Working Paper No. 11, "A Brief Glossary of Terms Employed in Geographic Names Standardization", provided an acceptable basis from which to begin definition of terminology.

The Chairman of the Group of Experts brought to the attention of the working group document No. E/3411, dated 7 February 1961, "Report of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names". Annex I of this document contains 41 tentative definitions of selected terms. A copy of this Annex, plus a first list which contains a number of terms the working group felt ought to be defined is attached.

It was agreed that definition should not be limited to a single language, and non-English terms already appear on this first list.

The definition of the term (glossary), which appears in resolution 19 D, page 14, of the Report of the Geneva Conference, Volume I, was felt to be unsatisfactory, and therefore heads this first list.

Carl Page

Convener of the Working Group

ANNEX I

List of selected technical terms

1. geographical name: a proper name, consisting of one or more words, used to designate an individual geographic entity.
2. toponym: the name of a natural feature.
3. place name: the name of a populated place.
4. feature name: the name of a natural feature.
5. geographic entity: a comprehensive expression referring to any object or place which has a geographic name.
6. natural feature:  
(or physical feature) any natural entity which may have a geographic name.
7. hydrographic feature: any body of water, including flowing water on land.
8. cultural feature: anything made or significantly modified by man, including a road, railway, bridge, etc.
9. populated place: any inhabited place.
10. generic term: the noun element of a geographic name indicating the type of entity.
11. specific term: the element of a geographic name identifying the type of entity.
12. map information: words on a map which do not constitute a geographic name but which indicate the presence of something or a characteristic of the area.
13. transliteration: the letter-for-letter transfer of a name from one alphabet to another alphabet.
14. transcription: the transfer of a name from one language to another on the basis of pronunciation; usually, but not necessarily, connotes transfer involving a non-alphabetic language. Not used in the lay sense of "copying".

15. official language: any language recognized at the national level which may be used in the legislature and the courts. Some countries recognize more than one language as official. A language that has some official sanction in part of the country, but not nationally, would not normally be considered an "official language".
16. national language: the dominant language, pervading all or most of a country.
17. principal language: the language most used within a country; if more or less evenly divided, there might be more than one principal language, e.g. French and Flemish in Belgium.
18. minority language: (or minor " ") any language not used by a significantly large part of the country's population.
19. dialect: a local form of a language.
20. patois: a variant form of a language, less wide-spread than a dialect.
21. writing system: any systematic method of writing.
22. syllabic writing system: a writing system using phonetic characters corresponding to syllables, e.g. kana in Japanese.
23. phoneme: the minimum unit of significant sound in the structure of a language; a distinctive sound or range of sounds interpreted by speakers of the language as one sound, and having a greater or lesser number of allophones.
24. diacritical mark: any mark added above, below or inside a letter as ordinarily written, including tone marks where appropriate.
25. modified letter: e.g. Icelandic  $\mathring{x}$ , Danish  $\phi$ , Polish  $\mathcal{L}$  and the ligatured letter *ae*.
26. vowel point: a mark placed above, below, or inside a letter to indicate a vowel, e.g. in Arabic or Hebrew. Whereas diacritical marks modify an existing letter, vowel points denote a sound which commonly is not written.

27. domestic standardization: the process whereby the authorized agency fixes a name or names on behalf of the users thereof, whether such use becomes compulsory or not.
28. alternate name: one of two or more names for the same thing.
29. variant name: a name other than that (or those) standardized or approved.
30. conventional name: a name used widely or over a long period which warrants retention even though not otherwise approved, e.g. "Vienna" for "Wien".
31. national names authority: a body having authority and instructions to standardize names within a country.
32. official publication: any map, list, guide, etc. having official status but not necessarily representing official standardization of names or spellings.
33. printing form: the manner in which the letters are put together as regards, e.g., capitalisation, spelling or hyphenation.
34. designation: a common noun indicating the type of thing named. A geographic name does not always contain a generic term, and when it does the generic term does not always make clear the nature of the thing named.
35. co-ordinates: geographical co-ordinates.
36. gazetteer: a list of geographic names identifying the nature and location of the thing named. Most lists of names issued by standardizing bodies are gazetteers.
37. geographical dictionary: a compilation of geographic names that provides the identifying and locating information included in gazetteers and such additional geographic information as population, area, resources, etc.
38. name index: usually a list of names in a publication, indicating the place in that publication where the name in question appears.

39. dictionary: a collection of words giving all the definitions of each word that are known to the compiler.
40. glossary: usually confined to a group of words on a specialized subject; more likely than a dictionary to specify the meaning which should properly be attributed to a word.
41. vocabulary: the stock of words of an individual or a group.

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First List of terms to be considered for definition.

glossary  
conventional name  
exonym  
geographical entity  
grapheme  
hydronym  
international  
lieu-dit  
lunar name  
oronym  
onomastics  
Ortsname  
standardization  
toponym  
toponymy