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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR
REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE THIRD UNITED
CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

REPORT BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Abstract of Paper Submitted by the United States of America

The work of the United States Board on Geographic Names continued to be active and productive since the Third UN Conference on Geographic Names in Athens. The Domestic Names Committee processed many thousands of names in the United States and its territories, and embarked, in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey, on a program to produce gazetteers of the individual states. During the past five years, the Foreign Names Committee approved thousands of names, many of them being new names of first-order administrative subdivisions of various countries. Continuing changes in national sovereignty and in spelling systems also kept the committee busy. With the assistance of the Defense Mapping Agency, the committee generated a new gazetteer program designed to revise out-of-date publications.

The BGN advisory committee worked on names of features in areas beyond any sovereignty. New gazetteers were produced by the Advisory Committee on Undersea Feature Names and by the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names. The Advisory Committee on Extraterrestrial Feature Names more and more relied on the International Astronomical Union for names. A new committee, the Advisory Committee on Names in Micronesia, was created to standardize names in the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands for a mapping program.

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The Board continued to work with other nations in programs to standardize names. Training was provided representatives from Thailand and Nigeria in Board office procedures. Bi-lateral naming programs were discussed with several countries as part of agreements for cooperative mapping and charting activities. Through the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, the United States also developed programs for the production of gazetteers of member countries and for the development of guidelines for national names agencies.

In response to numerous inquiries, a pamphlet about the Board and its work was published in 1980 and given wide distribution.

FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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Reports by divisions and governments
on the situations in their regions and
divisions and on the progress made in
the standardization of geographical
names since the Third United Nations
Conference on the Standardization of
Geographical Names.

REPORT BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA*

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Introduction.

In the five years since the Third United Nations Conference, the United States, through its official names body, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, has continued active on several fronts. This report covers in summary the work of the Domestic Names Committee, the Foreign Names Committee, the Advisory Committee on Extraterrestrial Features, the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names, the Advisory Committee on Names in Micronesia and the Advisory Committee on Undersea Features. Other reports will deal with automated data processing and domestic gazetteers.

Foreign Names Committee

This committee processed many thousands of names since 1977 and in collaboration with the Defense Mapping Agency, which provides staff support, initiated a program to revitalize the gazetteer program. The most ambitious activity resulted from the decision to accept names in China spelled according to the pinyin romanization system approved at the Athens Conference for international use. Because of the requirement to provide cross references for the Wade-Giles spelling which was used not only for official government purposes but also in all commercial and institutional applications (school books, wall maps, and a wide range of reference works), the committee generated a requirement to issue a special gazetteer that showed about 20,000 names both in Pinyin and Wade-Giles.

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Names in each system were listed alphabetically in separate sections, giving full locational data and cross-referenced to the equivalent names. The Pinyin names were taken from the Provincial Atlas of the People's Republic of China, Hanyu Pinyin Edition, 1977, and considerable additional information was developed. In 1979, representatives from China came to Washington from the 8th UNCEG in New York to meet with staff experts concerning various problems encountered in preparing the gazetteer. This meeting proved very useful to the staff, and the experts from China also gained an understanding of U.S. research and production methods.

Other Gazetteers published since 1977 provide coverage of the following areas: Kenya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Gibraltar. For Kenya, names authorities in that country collaborated in the research stage. (Nearly ready for publication are gazetteers for El Salvador, Iran, Papua New Guinea, and Afghanistan.)

By relying on new techniques, the Defense Mapping Agency is planning to revise and reissue an increased number of gazetteers each year. A library of publications covering virtually all foreign areas of the world and including some 4.5 million names (including variant cross references), some of the gazetteers are becoming out of date. To upgrade the gazetteers, the Defense Mapping Agency has inaugurated a revision plan that will include reliance on ADP techniques, collaboration with other countries, and, possibly, use of contracts. This plan will see the publication of about 10 gazetteers each year; some gazetteers will represent partial revisions, but in the process they will be transformed from manual to automated procedures which will enable full revisions to be carried out expeditiously in the future. The principle of collaboration with other countries, which always was a basic element in the U.S. gazetteer program, will assume increasing importance. Discussions are now under way with several countries to plan active collaboration in all stages of research and production. Through local cooperation, and through an exchange of materials, techniques, and publication plans, it is hoped that resulting gazetteers can be accepted for official purposes in both countries. In this way, the goal of providing full information about geographic names to all interested parties can be fulfilled. This goal is, of course, completely consistent with UN objectives.

In support of BGN functions, DMA also provided information on names to many Federal Agencies and to other users. DMA also periodically published a bulletin containing decisions made by the Foreign Names Committee and distributed it to users to inform them of new or changed names in foreign areas.

The Chairman of the Foreign Names Committee is Mrs. Sandra Shaw of the U.S. Department of State.

Domestic Names Committee

The work of this committee continued to focus on several areas. With respect to approving names in the United States, the committee approved about 9000 names each year. Of this number, approximately 1500 names were approved on the basis of individual decisions to approve names proposed for unnamed features, or to resolve conflicts in spellings or in other aspects of locational data. About 7500 additional names each year were approved en masse since no problems were associated with them.

While the committee has had extensive experience in geographic names, many complex issues have arisen, the solution of which requires different approaches. For example, the work of the Federal Board in connection with local naming authorities has sometimes revealed differences of policy. For this reason, the committee devoted much time to reviewing and revising policies, principles and procedures for treating domestic names. When complete, they will be incorporated in a published document concerning naming guidelines.

In cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, a national mapping agency that provides staff support to the Board's domestic names program, the committee has embarked on a new program to publish gazetteers of the states. The purpose of this program is two-fold: to provide a uniform reference system for the United States, and to implement the essential mission of the Board to standardize geographic names. At present, gazetteers for Delaware and New Jersey are being printed.

The committee has continued to work with state geographic names agencies. Perhaps its most active efforts are characterized by its involvement with the annual Western States Conference on Geographic Names. The sixth conference is scheduled in October of 1982 and will include representation from about 14 states, including Hawaii and Alaska. Among issues on the agenda will be the proper coordination of the Board and state agencies in names of joint interest.

For names of features common to the United States and neighbors to the north (Canada) and south (Mexico), the committee continued to collaborate with appropriate agencies in those countries. The Chairman of the committee is Mr. Robert C. McArtor of the United States Government Printing Office.

The BGN Advisory Committees

General

Over the history of the Board, national requirements for names information have sometimes surpassed normal capability of the agency. In such cases, special committees have been formed to address the problem, to undertake research, make decisions, and make recommendations for Board action. Such committees have addressed romanization of Persian and Arabic, names in Hawaii, and names of undersea features, antarctic features, extraterrestrial features, and of places in Micronesia. The current committees work is described below.

Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names

This committee has functioned for over 35 years as support to United States mapping programs of Antarctica. Since 1977, it has approved about 400 names for features. The committee has worked with other countries also active in the continent to assure agreement about names in areas where more than one country might be active. There has been fruitful collaboration between the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Japan in the last several years. Staff support is provided by the Defense Mapping Agency, and funding has been provided by the National Science Foundation, the United States organization that oversees all exploration and mapping programs in Antarctica. In 1981, a highlight of the committee's program was the publication of a comprehensive document, Geographic Names of the Antarctic, a gazetteer of some 15,000 names along with historical information. The publication was edited by Mr. Fred Alberts, long-time secretary of the committee who retired from the Defense Mapping Agency just prior to the publication of the gazetteer. Funds for much of the research and for the printing and binding were provided by the NSF. Mr. Walter R. Seelig of the National Science Foundation is Chairman, and Mr. Thomas Strenger of DMA is the current staff expert.

Advisory Committee on Extraterrestrial Feature Names

This committee exists to approve names on maps of planetary bodies published by the United States. The work of the International Astronomical Union in selecting names for features and the decreasing emphasis placed on planetary mapping in the past few years has, however, diminished the workload of the committee. Plans are being made now to reduce the committee to essentially a one-person body who will transmit IAU name decisions to a staff at the Defense Mapping Agency for a review of spelling and exercise of other editorial functions. The Board on Geographic Names and, finally, the Secretary of the Interior will give final approval. The Chairman of the committee is Dr. William E. Brunk, of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Advisory Committee on Names in Micronesia

This committee was created in 1979 to provide standardized names of islands in the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) to meet national mapping requirements. A unique feature of this committee is its geographical distribution. Members are from Washington, D.C., from Hawaii, and from the TTPI, a fact that makes meetings somewhat of a problem. Owing to the cooperation of members in the TTPI, including the Chairman, Kofo Yamada, much work has been done after only two meetings, one in the area itself and one in California. At present, names processed by the committee, which accepted most recommendations of local names committees, are being applied to maps produced by the U.S. Geological Survey. Since most of the work is done, the committee is inactive. Plans for gazetteers, however, are under consideration. The Secretary of the committee is Mr. Donald J. Orth, Executive Secretary for Domestic Names of the USGS.

Advisory Committee on Undersea Features

This committee continued to be active, having approved some 340 names since 1977. One of the accomplishments of the committee was to work closely with counterpart experts in Canada and to elaborate terms and definitions of undersea features. This work was later translated into agreement reached with the appropriate body of the International Hydrographic Organization in a meeting in Monaco in 1980. (This matter is more fully developed in the report on the UNGEON Working Group on Maritime and Undersea Features prepared by the Convenor, Dr. Richard R. Randall of the United States.) Even though the United States agreed to common terms and definitions, the committee still retains the view that certain exceptions can be made. For example, the large number of approved names based on specific depths appears to justify the retention of that standard. An example is that the Committee says that a Seamount rises at least 1000 meters from the seafloor. The other standard refers only to shape and general size.

A highlight of the committee's work since 1977 is the publication of the 3rd edition of the Gazetteer of Undersea Features in 1981. Containing some 6000 names, the volume lists names alphabetically and according to blocks of 30 degree intervals of latitude and longitude.

Another important action was the approval of terms and definitions of minor undersea features found on the continental shelf of the United States. The increasing emphasis placed on mapping the ocean floors around the United States in the last two decades has resulted in detailed knowledge of the physical character of this area. Part of this knowledge was the identification of features that differed in size and perhaps in shape from those occurring in deeper parts of the ocean. Compared with normal features, the newly detected ones had dimensions of perhaps only a few meters, compared with hundreds of meters that characterized the larger features. The committee felt that terms for deep-water features were not appropriate for those on the shelf and subsequently began a program to classify the new features. Working with the scientific community in the United States, the committee developed the following terms and definitions.

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
BENCH	A narrow, flat area on a slope
FLAT	A small, flat or nearly level area
FORK	A branch of a canyon or valley
FURROW	A closed, linear, narrow, shallow depression
GULLY	A small, valley-like feature
LEDGE	A narrow, usually horizontal, shelf-like ridge or projection of rock
MOUND	A low, isolated, rounded hill
RAMP	A gentle slope connecting areas of different elevations
RAVINE	A small, canyon-like feature

The terms and definitions have a practical application since they are for use in naming map sheets covering off-shore areas. It is policy that such maps take the name of a prominent physical feature that is depicted. For many undersea areas, minor features provide the only basis for a sheet name.

The Chairman of the committee is Dr. Joshua Tracey of the U.S. Geological Survey. Mr. William R. Garren of the Defense Mapping Agency is the staff expert.

Other Work

In furtherance of its program to collaborate with other nations in names work, the Board offered training to representatives from Thailand and Nigeria in 1978 and 1979, respectively. A pamphlet describing the structure and work of the Board was published in 1980 in response to many requests for information about the organization. Board members and staff participated in meetings of national and international professional cartographic and toponymic societies, including the Fifth International Congress on Onomastic Sciences (Michigan, 1981), the International Cartographic Association's Ninth International Conference on Cartography (Maryland, 1978), the 1980 Annual Fall convention of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping, and annual meetings of the American Names Society. In May 1982, the Board was a cosponsor of a three-day discussion on toponymic research in Washington, D.C. attended by individuals active in academic and practical aspects of place-name work.

While much work is carried out by committees, the Board also worked as a unit to review committee programs, to endorse new actions, and to provide overall direction. Meeting every three months, the Board is comprised of some 23 members and deputy members from nine Federal departments and agencies, all of whom serve the Board in addition to their normal agency work. The Chairman of the Board is Dr. John A. Wolter, Chief of the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress.