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TOPONYMIC DATA FILES

NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

Toponymic data files

Paper submitted by the United Kingdom

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Toponymic Data Files

(Report by the United Kingdom)

A long time before the Fourth Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain (OS) had established a computer-based file of all the names on the 1:50 000 scale map series. Various proposals were made to publish a single-volume gazetteer of those names (256,000 in number). The gazetteer then proposed would not have contained latitude and longitude. All names would have carried a grid reference.

After long deliberation it was finally decided to issue the gazetteer in microfiche form. This has proved popular with bodies like libraries which receive enquiries concerning place names. Its greatest asset is the annual up-date which is issued at low cost. The microfiche lacks latitude and longitude.

A private publisher has now published a hard-back single volume gazetteer of the names on the 1/50 000 series. The publication has been a cooperative venture of Macmillan and OS. The gazetteer contains latitude and longitude. It has 824 pages (297 x 210 mm) and it costs £50.

The 1/50 000 microfiche gazetteer comprises 34 standard microfiche at 48X reduction. It gives the definitive name, grid reference, sheet number, feature code. Feature codes are:

          City, town, village
          Water features
          Forest or other wooded areas
          Hills, mountains
          Antiquity (non-Roman)
          Antiquity (Roman)

Gazetteer data is also available from computer files for:

          The 1/50 000 series
          The 1/250 000 series
          Street Atlases - London and others
          Town maps

Data held on the 1/50 000 series and the 1/250 000 series consists of:

          Definitive name including a country abbreviation;
          upper/lower case-shift characters and accent characters

          National Reference System. Grid values are given for the SW
          corner of the grid square containing the feature named.
          County code
          Feature code
          Map sheet number(s)
          Sort key - the key on which data is normally sorted -
                ie the first 40 alpha characters of the name

Data held on Street Atlases:

          Definitive Street name including District Abbreviation with
                special characters
          National Reference System including a letter denoting the
          500m grid square where it needs to be identified
          Page number appropriate to the name.
          Sort key.

Data on Town Maps:

          Definitive Name
          Page number or local grid reference on the appropriate map
          Sort key.

Formats:

          Data is held on master files in standard format though not all
                fields may be used.
          Data can be extracted by country; by county or counties; feature
                code(s); rectangular area(s); map sheet(s).
          Data can also be extracted in any combination of record-fields and
                supplied in any sequence or arrangement of fields. Data can be
                supplied with or without case-shift; accent characters;
                specified character in end-character position, to mark the end
                of the record; leading word or character-count.

Media

Data can be supplied on:

> Line printer listings; paper-tape; ½-inch industry tape;
> microfiche; floppy disc.
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> Tape formats include 556 bpi 7-track; 800 bpi NRZI 9-track
> 1600 bpi Phase-encoded 9-track; 6250 bpi GCR; standard or
> non-standard tape format.
>
> Tapes can be supplied for ICL or VAX system or as non-standard
> ASC II or EBCDIC tapes.

Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland is embarking on the creation of a toponymic
data base. A test area has been selected and when trials have been completed
satisfactorily work will begin on Belfast and then extend to cover the whole
province. The names will be the names currently appearing on the various
official map series of the province.

The whole programme will take about ten years at the end of which time there
will be a complete collection of all names in the province down to and
including street and house names.