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SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON  
THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES

New York, 25 August-3 September 1992  
Item 6 (e) of the provisional agenda\*

TOPONYMIC DATA FILES: NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

Questionnaire on toponymic databases

COMMUNICATION, DATED 12 MARCH 1992, FROM HELEN KERFOOT, TEMPORARY  
CONVENOR OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC DATA FILES AND GAZETTEERS OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES, ADDRESSED TO:

- (a) MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES;
- (b) NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AUTHORITIES;
- (c) NATIONAL CARTOGRAPHICAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. The Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers convened in Geneva in November 1991 during the meeting of the Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

2. It was generally agreed by members present, that before the Working Group could make major recommendations, it was necessary to know what types of national toponymic databases already existed; what information they included and how it was gathered and updated; and, if the databases were automated, how the toponymic data were stored and disseminated. To gather that material, the Working Group decided to initiate a questionnaire, which it was hoped could be widely distributed in English, French and Spanish) and would be answered by as many authorities as possible.

\* E/CONF.85/1.

3. The information gathered should help the Group of Experts in various ways. It will enable them to:

- (a) Assist those who need to develop automated toponymic databases;
- (b) Cooperate on common data fields to be universally maintained (stored and updated);
- (c) Collaborate to develop practical mechanisms for exchange of toponymic data between national databases;
- (d) Work towards the acceptance and general use of international standards for data storage and exchange;
- (e) Encourage the use of national toponymic databases for national gazetteer programmes.

4. The Convenor thanks Ms. Anki Mattisson of the National Land Survey of Sweden for her leadership in creating this questionnaire. The completed pages should be returned to her by 1 May 1992. Her address and fax number are given on the last page of the questionnaire.

5. It is the intention of the Working Group to have, at least, a preliminary report prepared by 1 June, so that this summary information may be available to all who attend the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names when it meets in New York in late August 1992.

6. While it may not be possible for everyone to complete the questionnaire by May, a later response either sent by mail or brought to the Sixth Conference in New York, will still be valuable.

7. The interest and cooperation of members of the Group of Experts are greatly appreciated by the Working Group which looks forward to collaborating with all respondents in the near future.

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

QUESTIONNAIRE ON TOPONYMIC DATABASES

(Note: A separate form should be completed for each database, digital or card system. If you do not yet have a geographical names database, please turn to section H below.)

A. IDENTIFICATION

1. Country
  
2. Title of the database
  
3. Manager/Owner (federal department, federal or local agency, university etc.)
  
4. Contact person(s)

Information submitted by

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Department, agency, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Electronic access number: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Second contact

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Department, agency, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Electronic access number: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

B. STATUS

1. Areal coverage

(a) Identify the geographic area which is or will be covered by the toponymic database

(b) Have you compiled at least some information for the entire area identified in (a)?

Yes

No

If "no", indicate which areas are covered and which are not:

Areas covered: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas not covered: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Is the coverage uniform?

Yes

No

If "no", indicate why

2. Status of the geographical names

(a) Are the geographical names officially treated by a national names authority?

Yes

No

If the name is "yes", please provide the name of the authority

3. Is it a digital toponymic database?

Yes

No

Partial

If "no", are there plans for development of a digital database?

Yes

No

C. DESCRIPTION

1. Collection (sources from which names are recorded)

Official maps/charts                      Scale(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Field work (whether or not in connection with map production)

Historical material

Gazetteers

Unofficial maps

Text materials

Other sources                      Specify \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the (main) fields of information in your database?

- Type of feature
- Source(s) of name
- Map(s)/chart(s)                      Scale(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Coordinates
- Status of the name
- Date(s) of standardization of name
- Administrative units
- Variant names
- Language(s)
- Population
- Extension of features
- Length (of rivers)
- Name origins
- Others                                      Specify \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Total number of fields that might be recorded from one record: \_\_\_\_\_

D. UPDATING OF TOPONYMIC DATABASES

1. Updating process

- No updating
- Continuous
- Periodical updating

Describe:

2. Sources of updates

National names authority

Published maps/charts

Field work

Other Specify \_\_\_\_\_

E. OTHER MATTERS

1. Is your toponymic database produced for

Creation of a national gazetteer

Map-making

Research

Other purpose(s) Examples \_\_\_\_\_

2. If your database is used for a national gazetteer, is the gazetteer created according to the recommendations given in the resolutions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on national gazetteers (I/4 (E) and III/2)?

Yes

No

3. Have you published a gazetteer based on your toponymic database?

Yes

No

4. Are your geographical names written in the roman alphabet?

Yes

No

If "yes", please address questions (a) to (d), if "no", move on to question 5.

(a) Are there any diacritical signs in your names?

Yes

No

(b) If your answer to (a) is "yes", please give examples to indicate complexity.

Language(s) Examples

Language(s) Examples

Language(s) Examples

(c) Can you input and store in your database all your geographical names that are written in the roman alphabet?

Yes Describe:

No Explain:

(d) If your answer to (a) and (c) is "yes", how have you solved the problems of

On-screen viewing

Printing

Exchange of data

5. What writing system(s), other than the roman alphabet, do you use for geographical names records?



(a) Are they computerized?

Yes

No

F. TECHNICAL MATTERS OF DIGITAL TOPONYMIC SYSTEMS

1. Hardware

(a) Input (terminal, digitizer, etc.)

(b) Processing and storage unit

(c) Output (printer, plotter, etc.)

2. Operating system

VMS

UNIX

DOS

OS2

Other Specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. Database management system or other software

4. Is demonstration material (e.g. diskettes, tapes, etc.) available?

Yes

No

If "yes", is the demo available for a PC?

Yes

No

5. Have you arranged or would you be ready to organize a training course at your toponymic database?

Have arranged

Would be ready to

No

G. DOCUMENTATION OF TOPONYMIC DATABASES

1. Is documentation available?

Yes

No

If "yes",

(a) In what language(s)?

(b) In which format?

Hard copy

Digital

(c) What type?

User manual

Report

2. Is the information in your database available for sale?

Yes

No

If "yes",

(a) Have you established rules for acquisition and distribution of data?

Yes

No

Comments:

(b) Are your products

Standard packages?

Customized packages?

Both?

(c) Do you have follow-up service with clients who have received your data?

Yes

No

#### H. TOPONYMIC DATABASE DEVELOPMENT

What help do you need to establish/develop a toponymic database for your country?

Developing card and file system

Developing a PC-based system

Developing a mini-computer system

Deciding on appropriate international standards to use for computerized data storage and exchange

Other

Comments:

I. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please include any additional comments that you may wish to provide on your database:

Please send this form to: Anki Mattisson  
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National Land Survey  
S-801 82 GÄVLE, Sweden

Fax nr 46 26 687594

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