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SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE  
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF  
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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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  
FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of the United Kingdom

Paper submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland\*\*

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1. Since the Fifth Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was held at Montreal in 1987, the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names has been engaged in a number of projects. Among its principal activities has been the processing of all the names required for mapping the entire nation at 1:50,000 and 1:100,000 as part of international cooperation.
2. The Chairman of the PCGN has personally been involved for most of the period since the Fifth Conference on national mapping projects in a digital environment, which has included every aspect of the collection, processing and utilization of geographical names.
3. The PCGN developed jointly with the government authorities in the Maldives a romanization system for the Maldivian language. This system of romanization has been introduced in the maps and charts of the islands.
4. The Committee has taken part in a number of other international activities.
5. Various gazetteers have been produced for use by official bodies in the United Kingdom. All have been produced by computer technology.

#### ORDNANCE SURVEY OF GREAT BRITAIN

6. A few months before the Fifth Conference opened, the United Kingdom had completed, in response to a government demand, an inquiry into the handling of geographic information. The Committee charged with this task made important recommendations for the future. One of the major recommendations was to produce a unified digital database for Great Britain which would conform to the highest standards of quality and consistency. This, in fact, marked the transition from the production of digital cartography to the creation of a geographical information system (GIS).
7. The country was fortunate in having at its disposal basic scales of mapping at 1:1,250 and 1:2,500, the larger scale providing coverage of urban areas. It was equally fortunate in having a stable toponymy. Other national map scales are 1:10,000; 1:25,000; 1:50,000; 1:250,000 and 1:625,000. The complete database structured in GIS form will be completed by 1995. At present, over 140,000 maps exist in the required digital form out of a total of 230,895.
8. A major part of the work of the Ordnance Survey is now the provision of digital data and databases for government and private organizations. Basic source data for the national data bank includes the 1:10,000 series, making three scales in all - 1:1,250; 1:2,500 and 1:10,000. The 1:25,000 series is linked closely to the 1:10,000 scale.
9. Scales of 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 at the present time are derived separately, but research continues into the use of 1:10,000 scale data in the production of the 1:50,000 series.

10. There has been an increasing demand from users for the 1:250,000 scale data set which is both topographically and topologically of the highest quality.
11. Among the factors which made this possible were the declining costs of the hardware and great advances in software development. A National Transfer Format was an obligatory requirement for the supply of digital data to users, and compliance was achieved in 1990-1991.
12. As far as geographical names are concerned, the 1:50,000 series is the basis of the published Ordnance Survey gazetteer. At 1:250,000 scale there are names indexes associated with various products at that scale.
13. Geographical names are also associated with road centre line data for which there are many customers who use the data for calculating road distances and travel times. Names are also part of the Administrative Boundary-Line Dataset which, amongst many other applications, is used for analysis of census data, resource location, market research and local authority administration. Names can also be extracted from the large-scale database.
14. Whether used in administration or in management, in the operation of utilities or by private organizations, all names are derived from a common database and are, therefore, uniform.
15. Since, for many purposes, post-codes are used as a standard reference, post-code addresses are now linked to the National Grid map coordinate system.
16. Overall, the effect of the conversion to GIS format has been to preserve and, perhaps, consolidate the national stock of geographical names.

#### ORDNANCE SURVEY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

17. Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) is the official survey, cartographic and reprographic organization for the Northern Ireland government. In 1985 a SysScan system, operating within a DEC VAX environment, was installed to convert the topographical archive of large-scale maps of Northern Ireland into a computer mapping and topographic database (COMTOD). The Greater Belfast and surrounding areas of more than 2,000 maps at 1:1,250 and 1:2,500 scales are now complete and the remainder of Northern Ireland is scheduled for completion near the end of this decade.
18. The graphic database structure contains some 190 separate levels and is a links and nodes structure capable of handling points, line-strings and polygons, with all map sheets edge-matched and merged eventually to provide homogeneous cover for the whole of Northern Ireland. The system also enables the inclusion of associated textual information linked to relevant geometry, the link being achieved through a unique, system generated, Irish Grid, 12-figure reference representing the x and y coordinates of any relevant geometric element. All of the names that are on the maps are included in the

database and some of the names are also included in the associated textual data. Owing to this structure of the database, it is possible to extract names for various purposes including the production of gazetteers.

19. COMTOD will provide the geographical foundation for development of the Northern Ireland Geographical Information System (NIGIS).

20. This is a distributed, but fully integrated, geographical information system through which all of the major government and public utility functions will be linked.

21. NIGIS will develop as a network of individual databases, each held and controlled by the owners at their several locations.

22. The number of participants in the NIGIS programme has expanded as GIS awareness has increased and typical bodies represented are the DOE (NI) divisions, which include: Roads Service, Water Service, Planning Service, Land Registry, Planning and Conservation, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Social Services, the Valuation and Lands Office, the Geological Survey, the NI Electricity Service, the Housing Executive and British Telecommunications.

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