

Mid-America Geographic Information Systems Consortium (MAGIC) Metadata Triage

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Final Report

Category I - 2007

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Executive Summary

All phases of the project are complete. The approved extension allowed the team to complete the last workshop in Arkansas. The keynote of this project is the utilization of an existing state consortium to distribute important training and information through a shared curriculum. Over 100 workshop attendees in the region either familiarized themselves with or updated their familiarity with the CSDGM and how to apply it.

Project Narrative

The final MAGIC Metadata Triage workshop was conducted in Little Rock, Arkansas on May 13th by Learnon Dalby (AR) and Shellie Willoughby (OK). A schedule of workshop dates and number of attendees appears as Attachment 1. Metadata POCs were established for each state. They assisted in reviewing, updating and adapting the previously approved Virginia curriculum for the MAGIC region. Their names also appear respective to the workshops they taught in Attachment 1. Securing computer lab sites willing to host the trainings at no cost proved much simpler than the MAGIC region had originally anticipated. Workshop planning appears to have also been notably successful – as a quick review of the workshop surveys (see attachments) will show. This success was largely due to the individual state POCs and support from each state's geospatial infrastructure and population of users. There was mixed reaction to the inclusion of the additional metadata tool (XMLInput) chosen by MAGIC based on the recommendation of USGS' Leslie Bearden. Many students had already heard of or secured other metadata tools – but most were primarily using ESRI's ArcCatalog.

The regional workshop attendees came from many backgrounds – our original intention was to target local governments but although they comprised majorities in some states – in others - state agency staff members, federal employees and private contractors were notable or sometimes predominant.

Each MAGIC state was extremely supportive of the project. The MAGIC Communications Sub-committee had been tasked with providing email review and feedback as the project progresses and members were very helpful and responsive in this regard.

It should be noted that as a large regional entity – MAGIC has proven an effective vehicle for federal agencies to reach large numbers of geospatial users with a unified message benefiting the wider national agenda.

All curriculum materials including presentations, handouts, graphics and exercises are freely available and adaptable on the MAGIC web site at this location:

http://magicweb.kgs.ku.edu/magic/projects/metadata_triage.cfm

The final report for this project will also appear at the MAGIC website after acceptance at FGDC. This project was also reported on in a presentation at the recent MAGIC Symposium (February, 2008).

Challenges –

In the interim report I mentioned that the original intention had been for me – as project coordinator - to perform the initial review, adaptation and research. This was designed to alleviate additional time constraints for the state workshop POC's, who were already donating excessive amounts of their time away from their normal duties. The size of the curriculum review and research proved excessive for my schedule also but I was able to rely on project partners when I needed to and that phase of the project was finally completed. A change mid-stream on how we would sub-contract my services as project coordinator to MAGIC through the university proved problematic – the University not having a very efficient vehicle for dealing with an organization like MAGIC. This was handily overcome by my organization (MSDIS) sub-contracting directly with MAGIC. The issue of transient personnel (moving between jobs) in one state proved only a very slight delay – but two medical events proved a little more challenging. In one case an instructor was unable to travel to an adjoining state due to a family illness concern. This was overcome by the project coordinator traveling to Oklahoma to assist with that workshop. In the other case the project coordinator was out for nearly three weeks recovering from a heart attack. This necessitated a delay in this report – which was requested and promptly approved...

Workshop and Instructor Evaluations

One of the primary tools utilized for evaluating the effectiveness of the project was a basic Survey Monkey account that MAGIC maintains for such events. A sample of the surveys has been included in Attachment 2. All 8 instructors completed their respective state's workshop survey and slightly over half (52) of the workshop attendees also participated in the evaluations.

Feedback on Cooperative Agreements Program

What are the program strengths and weaknesses?

Strengths

The program's strengths can primarily be found in the almost singular funding by FGDC / USGS of this sector of the geospatial discipline. Although several other federal agencies fund other sectors (HS, DoD, natural resources etc...) no other entity as consistently funds projects and applications so valuable to the general geospatial population.

Weaknesses

I, again, repeat that a significant drawback continues to be initial project funding – we could achieve more with better funding. It's difficult from a perspective at this level to gauge just how successful we are being in convincing data creators that metadata should be SOP – people that I had assumed were creating metadata regularly in some cases weren't... On the other hand I was encouraged by the interest shown in the workshops and by the comments from the survey monkeys we made available for both instructors and students (see attached).

Where does the program make a difference?

The filter through benefit to the nation is not as remarked on as it should be in my opinion. Local governments are utilizing this training to properly document their data both for their own archival/administrative use and as a means of sharing data more effectively. This makes more data available and leads to better and more inclusive projects. Without FGDC's CAP these successes would not be possible. It is our best support for providing outreach and education to the wider geospatial community within the regional states. The CAP encourages partnerships that might not happen otherwise!

Was the assistance you received sufficient or effective?

Yes – always – especially from my USGS Missouri Liaison (Mr. Ray Fox) – and particularly from grant administrative staff who were very understanding and accommodating to changes in the project's timeline due to class scheduling and a sudden illness on my part.

What would you recommend doing differently?

No recommendations at this time beyond those in the narrative above.

Are there factors that are missing or need to consider that were missed?

Adapting a curriculum is certainly helpful but more time consuming than anybody on this project originally thought. However it should be stated again that the Virginia curriculum and materials provided online or by USGS (Ms. Leslie Bearden) proved invaluable.

It should be noted that instructor preparation vis-à-vis teaching the curriculum provided the greatest challenge to the project's instructors – this is born out by the instructor survey monkey evaluations and most especially by the comments each workshop instructor forwarded to the project group after conducting a workshop.

Are there program management concerns that need to be addressed? Time frame?

I know lead time from when the new CAP guidelines are announced – until the final day of submissions is sometimes difficult to acquire – but when possible it would lead to better projects with more partners – which I believe is most important...

If you were to do this again, what would you do differently?

My feelings since the interim report are unchanged - I would better investigate the contract process here at the university as regarding working with an organization such as MAGIC. What we thought was just another contract vehicle became far more complicated than originally planned. The timeline was certainly manageable under normal circumstances – and the process for asking for extensions was efficient and prompt.