

Geospatial Metadata

...the view from the library

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GIS in map libraries

- Traditional map library evolving into GIS data centres
- In Canada began collecting data in mid-90's
- Most service now centres on geospatial data: finding, organizing, delivering
- Metadata critical for service delivery

Geospatial metadata evolution

- April 1994, U.S. executive order
- Canada develops own standard
- FGDC becomes Canadian standard for metadata for CGDI
- ISO standard for metadata just available
- Producers slow to adopt & implement

Issues

- Data creators anxious to find & produce data, improve quality
- Concept of metadata foreign to creators
- After the fact activity when created
- Metadata standard complex, daunting (over 300 data elements)
- Institutional efforts to create own metadata tools
- Little appreciation of benefits

Results

- Data collections with little or rudimentary metadata
- Metadata development after the fact = gaps
- Still seen as a chore and not an investment
- Long term re-use of data seriously compromised
- Libraries becoming metadata creators

Challenges for librarians

- Understanding complex, technical information
- How to best make information available (e.g. catalogue records)
- Educating producers/creators about importance
- Educating students (future creators)
- Filling in the gaps

Some improvement

- Availability of ArcCatalog
- Development of web mapping applications and discovery portals
- “Metadata” no longer strange concept
- Some training available
- GIS students now being trained – next generation of data creators

What can librarians do

- Develop & share metadata for existing collections
- Identify cooperative opportunities, e.g. between libraries, Penn State U. model
- Share expertise
- Continue to educate producers/users
- Promote information management practices

Opportunities for future

- Begin dialogue between diverse communities
- Share information management expertise with data producers
- Identify opportunities to share workload & expertise e.g. participate in metadata creation