A YEAR OF CHANGES FOR THE GSDI

FOLLOWING ADOPTION OF ITS NEW GSDI STRATEGY 2015-2020, THE GLOBAL SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE ASSOCIATION AIMS TO IMPROVE CONTACT WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS THAT USE LOCATION-BASED INFORMATION, NOT JUST THE GEO COMMUNITY. ROGER LONGHORN EXPLAINS ITS PLANS FOR 2015 AND HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED

The Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) Association is an inclusive networking organisation of academic and research institutions, government agencies, commercial geomatics firms, regional GI associations, and individuals from around the world. The purpose of the association is to promote international cooperation and collaboration in support of local, national and international spatial data infrastructure (SDI) developments that will allow nations to better address social, economic and environmental issues of pressing importance.

GSDI was incorporated as a non-profit organisation in the US in July 2003, following a series of successful Global SDI Conferences that began in 1996. Today, GSDI has 40 organisational members from 20 countries, including the UN Economic Commission for Africa. The individual membership arm of GSDI has more than 400 members from 55 countries around the globe. GSDI is represented on the UN GI Working Group, the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management and has special consultative status within UN ECOSOC. It promotes the open data principles of the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations's Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEO/GEOSS) and is involved in SDI capacity-building activities in many developing nations through its Small Grants Program, which has funded more than 100 SDI-related capacity-building actions in the past 10 years.

GSDI is a member of the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies and has memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the International Cartographic Association, the International Federation of Surveyors, the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, and the Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety; it is also concluding MoUs with the Open Source Geospatial Foundation and the International Society for Digital Earth.

Why so many links?

Geospatial or location-based information is now globally ubiquitous, and the ability to most efficiently collect, manage and use such information relies on data harmonisation and service interoperability – the driving forces behind all SDI initiatives at all levels of society. Geospatial data is everywhere and new technologies permit ever more location-based information to be collected, distributed and used, often between and among sectors that were not previously thought to be involved in 'geo' or 'geomatics'.

GSDI positions itself as a communicator for SDI issues, challenges and good practices across all regions of the globe. Following adoption of the new GSDI Strategy 2015-2020, it also aims to improve contact with all stakeholders that use location-based information, not just the geo community.

How can the GSDI Strategy help you?

From the viewpoint of geospatial stakeholders, the new GSDI Strategy focuses on:

- Raising awareness of SDI challenges for implementers, users and beneficiaries of SDIs.
- SDI capacity-building.
- Sponsoring research into SDI issues, including best practice.

To raise awareness of SDI issues, GSDI monitors and publishes news on SDI developments around the globe, reporting these on the GSDI website and in regional newsletters, plus its five regional mailing lists and discussion forums. It also maintains one of the most extensive online geo events calendars available today.

One of GSDI's practical capacity building initiatives is its Small Grants Program, which sponsors workshops, seminars, and implementation projects in developing nations, with support from URISA's GIS-Corps. In 2014, it launched its 104th project since the program began in 2003. Since 2012, members in Taiwan have sponsored GSDI members to attend the two-week seminar on GIS and land management delivered by the International Center for Land Policy Studies and Training, with five GSDI members selected to attend the session this year.

This year, the association also begins its own series of webinars addressing specific SDI challenges, especially those relating to non-technical issues, such as data policies. The GSDI GI Knowledge Network spatial documents depot contains selected reports and studies specific to SDI and an open 'Community Registry' with details of more than 700 industry professionals and organisations, to offer wide networking opportunities.

SDI research initiatives

GSDI will also launch this year an ongoing initiative to collect, analyse and report on SDI best practices from different regions around the globe, to be published as a GSDI white paper on SDI. This is to continue work that began nearly a decade ago when the GSDI's SDI Cookbook was created and then published as an open source wiki document, with information now available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Polish and Albanian.

Perhaps the most significant research-related activity is the GSDI World Conference series that acts as the driver for professionals globally to focus on SDI issues. Since 1996, 14 conferences have been held and GSDI 15 is scheduled to be held in Taipei in March 2016. All conference proceedings are available online as open access documents.

Learn more about the GSDI Association and how to participate at www.gsdi.org. All are welcome!

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