Geospatial Solutions
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Annual Market Map

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Most new technologies invariably descend from heady heights after their initial
introduction and either land on the technology trash heap or disappear into the
information technology world where they become important but also invisible. The
capabilities these latter technologies offer often become commonplace: It took Daniel
Boone weeks to cross the Commonwealth of Kentucky and now any grandmother can do
it in a car in an easy day, including a long lunch.

One of the key mileposts along the technology adoption road is standardization. What
would our electrical system look like if each state had its own voltage and frequency
standards? How useful would our mobile phones be if they could not be used outside
their home areas? How much more useful will geospatial technologies become as we
reduce the impeding friction caused by inability to share and to interoperate?

The answer to that last question is: Much, much, much more useful.   Everything we do
happens somewhere and some-when - just think about daily movements of goods and
materials. Many of our daily spatial considerations are so mundane that they do not
require technology to measure or facilitate. Many activities, however, would benefit
from more effective use of information technology but never get that help because the
cost to get the answer exceeds the value of the answer. Creation and effective use of
standards reduces those costs and increases the value. The inexorable march towards
standardization will continue and the number of issues addressed will grow as the cost
falls and more and more solutions become economically affordable.

Market forces will play their role in the standards march as more and more vendors and
integrators figure out how to match their business models to capitalize on the value of
standardization. Just like international telephony standards enable transparent global
access to diverse national telephone systems, international geoprocessing standards
enable transparent global access to diverse geospatial data and services. The U.S.
Geological Survey's National Map initiative, by using consensus, industry standards from
the OGC, will add its weight to this march toward the use of standards. For the last two
years, the UK Ordnance Survey has been distributing its data using an application profile
of the OGC Geography Markup Language (GML). The Canada Geospatial Data
Infrastructure (CGDI) and National Forest Information System (NFIS) applications
depend on standards from the OGC, OASIS, and W3C. I believe that the momentum has
already become irresistible and in the year 2005 the move to standards as an integral part
of the geospatial infrastructure will become undeniable.