OGC's GEOWorld Newslink brief for the April, 2000 issue of GeoWorld

OGC Makes Progress with New Specs, Standards Convergence

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The OpenGIS Web Map Server Interface Specification and OpenGIS Coordinate Transformation Specification were adopted at OGC's meetings in Vancouver in February. The new specifications enable automatic adjustment of a view so it will geometrically, point-by-point and feature-by-feature, overlay another view, adjusting to the first view's spatial reference system. The OpenGIS Coordinate Transformation standard will use as a resource the European Petroleum Survey Group's (EPSG) registry of commonly used coordinate reference systems.

A February 14-16 "Geospatial Standards Summit" in Palo Alto, CA at Sun Microsystems was called by JTC1 – the joint Technical Committee of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) to explore avenues of cooperation among the de jure standards bodies, industry consortia and ad hoc groups who are working to establish standards for spatial and geospatial information and processing. (See http://www.opengis.org for details.)

There was agreement that it makes sense to share the burden of developing low-level infrastructure standards, i.e., standards that address the most common and basic tasks in geomatics applications, such as data store access and management, symbolization and presentation, catalog services, coordinate systems and transformations, common XML tags, and the ability to combine and manipulate both vector and grid coverage feature representations. OGC, as the membership organization of companies actually developing and marketing geospatial software that interoperate through standards in these areas, figures to play a strong role in this coordinated standards development activity.

Also in February, in Nice, France, OGC took part in a WAP/W3C Workshop on Position-Dependent Information Systems.

Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) is an open, global specification that empowers users of mobile wireless devices to easily access and interact

with web-based information and services regardless of screen size or other client device capabilities. The WAP Forum is the 200+ member industry association that is developing WAP. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the organization responsible for World Wide Web standards.

Ron Lake, president of Galdos Systems (Vancouver, BC, Canada) and principal author of OGC's OpenGIS "Geospatial Markup Language" (GML), explained how specifications developed in OGC can meet the needs of WAP and W3C in mobile computing environments. OGC's draft GML Specification is a spatial implementation of XML (Extensible Markup Language). XML goes beyond HTML, providing a more powerful way to communicate complex information content without enforcing a particular style of presentation. XML is a key "business-to-business" Internet technology. GML will become a key geo-enabler of Internet information systems, including those that support mobile devices.

There was general agreement by the end of the W3C/WAP Workshop that OGC's GML provides a promising solution to WAP's geospatial requirement. Actions were taken for further exchange of information and for discussion of possible cooperative projects.

The significance of these developments will be explained in a feature article in the May issue of GeoWorld.

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