

# GIS Professional

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...joining the geography jigsaw



## Handheld technology at the pole

Analytics helps show us the money!

Asset management moves with the times

The business value of OGC standards

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A look at the life of... a MapAction volunteer!

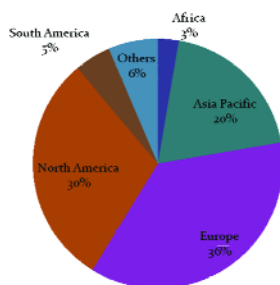
Product Interview: time to Coordinate

*and much more with*

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## Geographic Distribution

## By regions:



## By countries:

USA	24.3%	Chile	0.7%
Australia	11.1%	Mexico	0.7%
Canada	5.4%	Norway	0.7%
UK	5.4%	Poland	0.7%
Germany	3.7%	Portugal	0.7%
Spain	3.4%	Russia	0.7%
France	3.0%	Bolivia	0.3%
Italy	2.7%	Czech Republic	0.3%
Denmark	2.4%	Egypt	0.3%
India	2.0%	Ghana	0.3%
New Zealand	2.0%	Greece	0.3%
Sweden	2.0%	Hungary	0.3%
Brasil	1.7%	Japan	0.3%
Netherlands	1.7%	Kenya	0.3%
Finland	1.4%	Kuwait	0.3%
UAE	1.4%	Madagascar	0.3%
Argentina	1.0%	Nigeria	0.3%
Belgium	1.0%	Pakistan	0.3%
China	1.0%	Serbia	0.3%
Croatia	1.0%	Singapore	0.3%
South Africa	1.0%	Slovenia	0.3%
Switzerland	1.0%	Turkey	0.3%
		Vietnam	0.3%

Slide 19 from the OGC 2011 Business Value Survey shows the geographic distribution of respondents to the survey with the largest proportion being from Europe. Source: [https://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact\\_id=48440](https://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact_id=48440) (Prepared by Xexin Zhao & Mu Xia 2012).

(30%) and then Asia and the Pacific (20%). Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents had already adopted OGC standards although nearly two-thirds of respondents were not actually members of OGC. Nearly two-thirds had adopted some OGC standards for over three years with, on average, technology providers having adopted standards earlier.

### The top four standards adopted by both technology users and providers were:

- Web Map Service (WMS)
- Web Feature Service (WFS)
- Keyhole Markup Language (KML)
- Geography Markup Language (GML)

The primary benefit of adopting standards was identified as improved customer satisfaction and service. Users also gave high ratings to coordination with partners, reduced operating costs, improved productivity, market expansion and competitive advantage highly. The providers rated market

## What is the business value of OGC standards?

Following the recently released findings of the Open Geospatial Consortium's 2011 Business Value Survey, ConsultingWhere's **Les Rackham** reviews the report for *GiSPro*.

STANDARDS ARE "GOOD THINGS". But where are the case studies – or studies of any sort – that can help those making business cases for the adoption of open standards <sup>1</sup> within their organisations? They are rare or non-existent. Few identify the costs of adoption and/or the resulting benefits – particularly in the field of geographic information. Cases for getting involved in the development of open standards are equally rare. Thus, the recently released findings from the study by the Business Value Sub-Committee (BVC) of the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) on the value of open standards are to be welcomed. The report is available as a set of slides from [https://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact\\_id=48440](https://portal.opengeospatial.org/files/?artifact_id=48440).

The focus of the study was on OGC standards with the aim of assessing their adoption status and business value. The ISO standards developed by TC/211 were not included although a number of OGC standards have been adopted by ISO.

**Benefits and costs** Technology users and providers were both involved in the survey. Over 300 organisations responded from around the world, which is impressive and indicates the degree of interest in the topic. The largest proportion were from Europe (36%) followed by North America

expansion, competitive advantage, reaching new markets and reduced development costs.

The costs of adoption were seen as higher or a greater barrier by users than by providers. Employee training was rated by both as the greatest cost. Users also rated organisational changes, integration costs, security & privacy, and implementation costs as significant. Providers also rated integration costs, implementation costs and organisational changes.

These results are subjective assessments; they are useful in pointing to potential costs and benefits but can only be a start in seeking to justify standards adoption. These findings, on their own, are unlikely to convince a board of directors that this is an area worth investment.

Three quarters of respondents, both users and providers, agreed that OGC should provide a certification service for clients, i.e. an independent certification that an application conforms to the relevant OGC standard or standards. The top four listed as requiring certification were WMS, WFS, GML and WCS (Web Coverage Service).

The survey also looked at standards participation and promotion. Technology providers participated more in OGC activities than users although both users and providers claimed to actively promote standards whether members of OGC or not.



**The primary benefit of adopting standards was identified as improved customer satisfaction and service.**



**Still a way to go** So what can be concluded from this survey? It could not be described as a random survey. Over 300 organisations participated globally so the results should not be dismissed lightly. Of these, 86% had already adopted some OGC standards but often over a narrow spectrum. Amongst users there was the perception that acceptance of OGC standards was only moderate with providers expressing a slightly higher perception of acceptance. There is still some way to go to acceptance and adoption of these standards – especially if the biased nature of this survey is taken into account. The top four standards should not come as a major surprise: they would probably be top of most GI interoperability lists. The user and provider perceptions about costs and benefits are useful indicators but also point to the need for objective i.e. financial measures of costs and benefits from case studies.

The BVC are doing valuable work in a neglected area. They should be praised for taking the initiative in launching this survey and for making the findings available. This now needs following up with more detailed work, particularly the development of case studies to provide greater objectivity and input to business cases justifying the adoption of standards.

#### References:

- 1) Unfortunately there is no generally agreed definition of “open standards” but in general we are referring here to standards that have been adopted and maintained by a not-for-profit organization, have an open decision-making process available to all interested parties, and are available freely or at a nominal charge with no constraints on re-use.

*The views represented here are those of the author and should not be taken as representative of AGI or of the Standards Committee.*



#### About the author

Les Rackham is one of the directors of ConsultingWhere, a business consultancy specialising in location information, and he is also a member of the Association for Geographic Information (AGI) Standards Committee.



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**For more information, contact:**



**PV Publications Ltd**, publishers of *GIS Professional*, *Geomatics World* and *Engineering Surveying Showcase* magazines.

**Tel:** +44 (0)1438 352617

**Email:** [editor@pvpubs.demon.co.uk](mailto:editor@pvpubs.demon.co.uk)

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