

Open Access to Geo-spatial Information

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Some propositions:

Democracy:

the ability of a person to have choice.

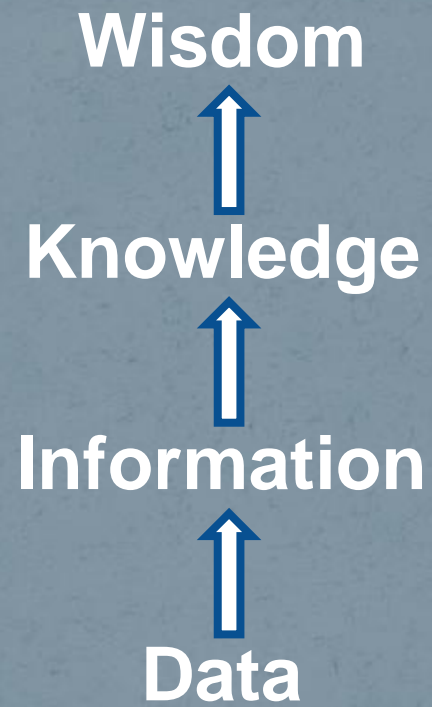
Choice: freedom; power.

“Knowledge is Power”

Sir Francis Bacon

**To have choice you must be empowered, and
therefore you must have knowledge.**

Some propositions:



Imagery =
Rich
source of
information

Rural area in
South Africa



Three Essential Requirements



Usability



Accessibility



Availability



Essential requirement

Accessibility:

- User knows what data is available.
- Source of data transparent to user.
- ICT infrastructure (including bandwidth and cost).
- Format of data.
- On-time.
- Standards.
- **Affordability (cost) of data.** ←
- **Open data (restrictions).** ←

Two arguments

Pro-Restricted and Charged Data

vs

Pro-Open and Free Data

Pro-Restricted and Charged Data

- National security.
- Protection of personal information/identity.
- Protection of intellectual property.
- Protection of sensitive information, including endangered species.
- Users do not appreciate the value of information if it is free (no charge).
- Data collection and maintenance is expensive and costs must be recouped.
- Governments do not fund data collection – information is only a means to an end.
- Institutional protection.

Pro-Open and Free Data

- ✓ Information has no purpose unless used.
- ✓ Information must be affordable to all.
- ✓ Restricted access will limit use of information.
- ✓ Restricted access will drive the user to other sources – with risk of reliability and quality.
- ✓ Open data promotes democracy.
- ✓ Public data collection paid for by fiscus should not be charged for – double taxation.
- ✓ In cases of emergency fast and ready access to information is critical – no time to resolve access issues and payments.

Key Challenges in Africa

- Politicians do not appreciate need for fundamental geo-spatial information.
- National mapping agency suffers lack of financial support.
- Institutional survival – rivalry, lack of cooperation.
- National mapping agency in some countries is part of military – information is classified.
- Restrictions on imagery acquisition.
- Incapacity to collect, maintain and disseminate geo-spatial information.
- ICT infrastructure limited and unreliable electrical energy supply.

Opening Up Access to Geo-spatial Information

- Fundamental geo-spatial information must be accessible to all.
- Appropriate data policies – limited restrictions only (national security, privacy of individual); affordable; institutional cooperation and collaboration; synergistic arrangements; timely access to relevant, reliable information.
- Capacitating users.
- Political support.

Opening Up Access to Geo-spatial Information

- South Africa's national mapping agency changed its data policy about 12 yrs ago to cost of supply (COFUR).
- Result in change to COFUR = 500% increase in dissemination of geo-spatial information.
- Multiplier effect to economy (studies in Europe indicate 1:100).
- Cost of saving lives and assets is even more.

Conclusion

Access to open and affordable geo-spatial information is essential in any democratic society.

Thank you

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