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Constructing a Partnership: Nuts and Bolts Perspective  
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I have been asked to share with you information about the partnership that I have "under construction." I've been working on this for a couple of years, and still have a ways to go, but I think there may be some information about the process that I have gone through that may be worth sharing with you.

As many of you probably are aware, I have been involved with maps and cartographic information for a long time, so it will come as no surprise to you that the partnership that I am working on involves cartographic and spatial data. I have two underlying concerns that caused me to pursue a partnership idea.

One, I am and have been for a very long time, concerned with the preservation of data. Long before we talked about the transition to an electronic depository, I was concerned about what was happening to historical data when map revisions were made electronically in the map producing agencies. This has been going on for a long time. Secondly, I became concerned when it became apparent that spatial databases were being withdrawn from the depository library program because there was no cost-effective way of distributing some of these huge data sets, specifically the DOQs (digital orthophotoquads).

Now, having said that much, I would like to interject here, that the content of my partnership idea is not what is important about what I have to say. I'm talking about cartographic and spatial data, but I could just as easily be talking about Bureau of Reclamation projects or National Park Service data or trade data from the Department of Commerce. What I hope to communicate is the process that I have gone through to get to where I am now. It is my hope that by sharing this process with you that it may inspire you to pursue a partnership idea in some area that is of special interest to you. My opportunity to pursue the partnership option came from my involvement with and membership on the Cartographic Users Advisory Council. For those of you who are not familiar with this Council, the Cartographic Users Advisory Council (CUAC) is made up of representatives of six map library organizations and organizations which have an interest in maps. These organizations are ALA's Map and Geography Round Table (MAGERT), the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT), the Geoscience Information Society, SLA Geography and Map Division, the Western Association of Map Libraries (WAML), and the North American Cartographic Information Society (NACIS).

CUAC meets annually, usually in the Washington, DC area with map producing agencies and at least one representative of GPO. Each representative on CUAC is assigned one or two agencies to liaison with throughout the year. The goal is to establish a good contact with the agency, learn as much as possible about the activities of the agency and to communicate to the agency the mission of the Federal Depository Library Program.

Over the years we have gotten to know some of these agency representatives very well and have developed a good working relationship with them. CUAC has been meeting since 1978. Beginning in 1984, when both U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Defense Mapping Agency partnered with GPO for the management of their depository programs, CUAC began working with GPO as well.

The mission of CUAC is similar to GODORT's adopt-an-agency program, which operates within the Federal Documents Task Force. It seems to me that the adopt-an-agency program or concept would be a very good vehicle through which one could pursue an agency contact that could ultimately lead to a partnership.

At the 1997 CUAC meeting, USGS explained that they were having to withdraw the DOQs from the depository library program, and explained the reasons for having to do that. The DOQs are digital orthophotoquads, which are aerial photographs covering most of the U.S. Basically, these huge datasets were expensive to produce, and sales of this product to the public and commercial vendors had not reached the level that USGS had anticipated, so they had decided to press them on demand only. As an alternative to putting them into the depository program, they were also offering to provide them on demand for a price to GPO, but they could not continue to distribute them to all of the libraries that had selected them. This was not a matter of the agency not wanting to cooperate with the depository program, but the reality of the situation was that they could not afford to distribute the information in the way they had originally hoped to do.

Of all of the electronic spatial datasets that USGS has distributed, the DOQs are the only one that is not distributed in any other way. There is no paper product. If we don't get them electronically, we don't get that information at all. This is truly information that is not making it into the public domain in our libraries. Some of you may have accessed DOQ information on Microsoft's Terraserver <<http://terraserver.microsoft.com>>. USGS has a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement with Microsoft for putting images from the DOQs on the Internet. This has been a research effort for Microsoft to develop their technology for serving very large datasets. It is not certain how long they will maintain this site.

The Terraserver has a huge amount of DOQ data, images of the whole US, but they are just images and one cannot do anything with them other than view them. With the data that we should have gotten on CD-ROM we would be able to download the data for the image we wanted into a software program, such as ERDAS or ArcView and incorporate it into whatever map we are working on. We could display thematic information on it, or

overlay the image with another map. In other words, from the CD-ROM we would have information that our users could interact with and use in their research, not just view on the screen or order off-line.

Although the DOQs are the only firm example I have of spatial data that has been withdrawn from the depository program, it seems to me that this could be just the tip of the iceberg. There is probably other electronic data available in other map producing Federal agencies that is just as expensive and complex to distribute to libraries that we probably are not getting into the depository program at all. Maybe we don't even know it exists. And how do we know that it is being preserved? Are revisions being made over the top of old data without a copy of the old being saved for historical purposes? If this data goes to NARA, do they have the capacity to archive it, refresh it, and to migrate it when necessary?

At the CUAC meeting where USGS announced that it had withdrawn the DOQs from the depository program, there was also a representative from the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), who indicated that she would be willing to work with us to see if there was any other way that this information could still be distributed. That willingness on the part of another Federal agency was the impetus for exploring the partnership idea. Shortly after this I talked with a few folks at GPO about the idea of a partnership, but only that this was an idea I was pursuing on behalf of CUAC. We took no action at that time. GPO noted the fact that I was interested in pursuing this, offered to help if they could and asked that I keep them informed.

About a year after that particular CUAC meeting, two members of CUAC met again with GPO, USGS and FGDC to discuss how we might proceed. By this time I had begun to think in terms of all, or at least many Federal map producing agencies and not just USGS. And I began thinking that a partnership for cartographic and spatial data would need to involve more than one library as well.

My idea is this. That a consortium of depository libraries be established to partner with Federal map producing agencies and GPO. The consortium members would each commit to providing permanent, user friendly access to spatial and cartographic data. The agencies would provide just one set of their data to the consortium and the consortium would make it accessible over the net. The way in which the data would be distributed among consortium members has not been determined. Consortium members have not been totally determined. What is known is that consortium members, which would be depository libraries, likely those with a strong map library committed to electronic cartographic information access, would likely have to work with others on their campus such as geography departments and computer centers in order to have the resources to make this commitment.

Our hope is that with the help of expertise from geography departments, better access could be provided to spatial and cartographic data. Perhaps a query by geographic area would give one the option of clicking on a variety of types of data. A common interface would be developed for accessing all types of cartographic data. Huge data sets would

be stored on large servers in the computer centers of consortium members. Data that could not be stored could be available 'near line' on demand by using robot technology. Data would be refreshed to assure continuing access and migrated to new technology as necessary. I envision a consortium of perhaps 10 libraries. This would be small enough so that members could work together to share expertise already developed in the geographic information systems field and to further make this technology easier for us to use in our libraries.

This is the part that is still under construction. This cannot be done without major money. My goal is to get grant money of some kind that would fund this idea. That is where I am at the moment.

The details of this particular partnership idea are less important here than the process by which the inspiration for the partnership occurred and the steps taken toward implementation. Let me say in summary, that there are certain elements that appear to me to be necessary for the formation of a partnership. Number one, request and read GPOs partnership agreement to determine if this is something that you are interested in being involved in. If you are, then:

1. You need to have an area of interest or area of need that you wish to pursue for your institution. You need to have an interest in making this information accessible and permanently available.
2. Make some contacts with the agency concerned. Try to find someone in the agency who has similar interests in assuring permanent access to their data. This may not be the first or even the second person you talk to, but keep trying. You may be interested in doing this through GODORT's adopt-an-agency program.
3. Talk to GPO about your idea and your goals.
4. Be patient and persistent. Partnerships, I believe, may not be built overnight, or at least the relationship with your agency contact usually will take a bit longer than that.

Although I would agree with George that we must move beyond each partnership being a work of art, I suspect there will always be some that will require a bit of creativity and careful crafting. At the same time, however, the process will get easier with more experience. After all, the first few of these have required charting new territory. Since GPO now has experience in the development of several partnerships, the process should be easier and faster.

5. Get the approval of your administration early on. This is a significant commitment that is being made by your institution, and not just by you.

It seems to me, that this 'notion' of partnership, as I have heard George refer to it a few times this week, is very exciting. We are charting a new way of doing things. The old method of regional libraries preserving everything in perpetuity doesn't work any more. The paradigm has shifted, as much as I dislike that term, I guess it suits this situation

better than anything else. We have an opportunity here to be pioneers in developing a new way of preserving public information. Until someone comes up with a better idea, partnerships are the way we will do it. The field is wide open. There are literally hundreds of areas that need our attention. From the tiniest subagency or bureau to the very very big, there are many exciting opportunities. I hope that you will give this notion of partnerships some thought.