Minutes  
Committee on State Cartography (CSC)  
June 28, 2010  
(Room 320, Pyle Center, UW-Madison)

Present:  Steve Ventura (substitute chair), UW-Madison/LICGF; Jerry Mahun, MATC; Matt Kures, UW-Extension; Tom Evans, WGNHS (substitute for Jamie Robertson); John Ellingson, NGS; Glen Schaefer, DOT (substitute for Ray Kumapayi); Dick Vraga, USGS; David Hart, UW-Sea Grant; Jaime Stoltenberg, UW-Robinson Map Library; Ken Parsons, DNR; Don Dittmar, Waukesha County  
SCO Staff:  Howard Veregin, State Cartographer; Jim Lacy, Associate State Cartographer; AJ Wortley, Senior Outreach Specialist  
Absent:  Brenda Hemstead, SCO; Curtis Pulford, DOA-GIO; A-Xing Zhu, UW-Geography

Meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm by Steve Ventura substituting as Chair.

Administrative

Additions to Agenda

No additions.

Minutes

Ventura asked for approval of minutes from December 16, 2009 meeting; motion approved.

Next CSC Meeting

Proposed Fall 2010 meeting (to be scheduled) the week of November 8.

Staffing

Veregin gave a re-cap of the vacant Administrative Program Specialist position. He explained that it had been frozen since January, 2009 by L&S and that the position was approved, advertised and open for applicants from June 9-21. He noted the necessity of re-titling the position from Associate Outreach Specialist to the current title while holding expectations of duties relatively the same. SCO staff plan to review applications and schedule interviews over the next few weeks, with hopes of filling the position near the end of July.

Funding/grants

Veregin updated the status of several grants in which the office is involved. An extension was given through March, 2010, for the USGS Grant (administrative support to WIGICC). It was noted that the 3-year Baldwin Grant (aerial photography preservation – Howard Veregin, Peter Gorman, co-PI’s) will end in December 2010 and that the SCO is partnering on submitting a collaborative grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities, NEH, to continue building upon and expanding this important work. Veregin explained that the office had been part of two unsuccessful grant applications – and FGDC CAP grant and a USGS Partnership grant pursuing integrated transportation data and integrated PLSS information projects respectively. Undaunted, the office will continue to pursue emerging grant and partnership opportunities as they arise. Vraga noted that the failed USGS grant was partially a result of last-minute changing criteria for funding by USGS.

Geography Relationship

Veregin noted staff currently serves on various committees and that the office budget supports part of the building shared IT Manager and departmental Financial Specialist. Veregin further
summarized the changing face of the Geography department. This primarily revolved around changes in leadership and administration, new faculty and the resignation (Dr. Mark Harrower) and sabbaticals (Drs. Zhu and Burt) of key cartography/GIS faculty. He indicated that the SCO is working closely with the department to understand how the SCO’s role may change, expectations by the department may change, and how generally sub-units fit into and support the departmental mission. Ventura inquired briefly as to the nature of departmental discussions. Veregin described them as being primarily of an administrative, budgetary and HR nature. Vraga prompted for a bit more elaboration. Veregin explained that historically, the SCO has been in a very different position than it is today. And while there are several drivers for this trend, it is clear the SCO needs to clearly demonstrate how we contribute to and add value to the department and departmental mission.

It was noted that the office continues to pursue opportunities to collaborate with the department most notably the Robinson Map Library led by Jaime Stoltenberg. It was also noted that due to sabbaticals and faculty vacancy that Veregin may be teaching a course in Spring 2011.

Questions and Comments about Activity Report
Hart asked for an explanation of GeoMAPP, which was provided by Wortley. Hart asked about the NEH proposal. Additional details were provided by Stoltenberg and Veregin. Hart asked about the status of the coastal/state elevation data inventory. Lacy gave a status update including the fact that current information is up on the NOAA site. Ventura asked for thoughts on WIGICC. Veregin indicted a key factor will be whether the Council can engage the network and develop momentum toward permanency. Veregin also indicated SCO would continue to support through web support, etc.

Strategic Planning Overview
Overview
Veregin provided an overview of the strategic plan. The goal was to have plan in place after Veregin’s first year. The SCO consulted with the UW Office of Quality Improvement for guidance. The planning process was significantly different than previous plan formulation. It was thought it would be valuable to do some “soul-searching” and examine SCO staff thoughts on strategic initiatives and direction. This is still effectively a “draft” document for which SCO does want feedback. The hope is for some consensus from this Committee.

Veregin did a brief walkthrough of components of the strategic plan. The plan is not a comprehensive list of all the projects and activities in which the office is involved. Rather it contains 5 strategic initiatives on which the office would like to focus in the mix of broader activities each year. The first relates to statewide data integration, the second to catalog and access to geospatial data, the third to coordination within UW-Madison and the UW system, the fourth to elevating research activities, and the fifth to the more traditional SCO role associated with education and support of the geospatial community including interactions with professional associations, workshop, content delivery, etc.

There are initiatives or main activities under each priority area. Some are fairly specific (e.g. PLSS data development.) An attempt was made to identify projects or activities that are very tangible and measurable. In some cases, this was more difficult (e.g. 3rd and 4th priorities). The concept is to give a very short list of high-priority items that the SCO can focus on and use to create an annual business plan which takes into account budgetary and staffing requirements to reach those goals. The plan attempts to be outward-looking, as evident from the Vision statement which has been revised to address not what the SCO is or will be but what the office hopes to see in the state.

Discussion
Vraga: Did you attempt to characterize your constituents?
Veregin: Not explicitly but implicitly; we are aware of our traditional and broadening constituency of “geospatial users.” Discussion followed of the line between broadened focus and ability to best serve a specific segment of that population.
Hart: Perhaps you should point out that the Mission derives from the statute and University mission as updated to accommodate new technology and delivery methods.
Vraga: Clarify what is meant by integrated information. Is it data or meta-information?
Veregin: It includes a bit of both.
Vraga: Will you solicit feedback from the broader community?
Veregin: Yes. Geography, WLIA and others.
Ventura: Suggest re-sharing of plan in November upon changing of guard in government.
Vraga: Do not see a mention of federal government, NSGIC or federal programs. Is that intentional or is it being de-emphasized? SCO is a good liaison for understanding, communicating about and relating federal trends and initiatives as related to Wisconsin.
Lacy: Can add something about federal but that is something we would do anyway. We are trying to identify measurable strategic initiatives.
Additional discussion of metrics and making goals measurable.
Hart: Have done a good job balancing tangible goals with flexibility.
Mahun: 100% target under PLSS is likely unrealistic and that number stands out as few other priorities have this same level of specificity.
 Wortley: Any suggestions?
 Suggestion varied from “target full participation” to “target full involvement” to “target 100% increase in participation.”
 Ventura: Suggest pulling out as separate initiative the notion of incorporating research and derived datasets as a timely and valuable effort.
 Hart: Suggested that maybe a pilot would be appropriate – some activity related to the St. Louis Estuary NERR.

Break (2:25-2:40)

Further Strategic Plan Discussion
Veregin: Is there anything significant we missed?
Some discussion of federal agency role, as well as standards.
Ventura: Initiatives III A/B are centered around more engagement with faculty and staff statewide. Wonder if it’s time to have a WLIA Education session. There have been 1 or 2 in the past specific to educators. Second, would encourage you to push hard to gain appreciation from Geography for what the office (and all subunits) does. Suggest some kind of committee. Also recommend Veregin request adjunct faculty status.
Vraga: Regarding Initiative I/C on aerial photography, did you discuss other possibilities, e.g. LIDAR on which to focus efforts.
Dittmar: Suggest not specifying which dataset is most important but stay flexible to get behind the data initiative that’s most timely at the time.
 Schaefer: Suggest generalizing to “data” not knowing what technology and data needs will exist in 3 years.
Veregin: Could generalize this bullet point to aerial acquisition and related data, point taken. But where is balance between specificity and general but achievable ends?
Ventura: Has statewide land cover dropped off the horizon? There are a lot of constituents that would want updated statewide land cover. Gov’s energy bill that almost passed this spring had a land cover component.
Ventura: Question of 1:500K initiative – who will lead and guide?
Veregin: Perception that there is a need and such a database does not exist. We would guide with assistance of an advisory committee.
Ventura: Not disagreeing with initiative, just suggest that deciding what the rendered maps will be is critical. Reference state planning office set in the 1970s for classrooms etc.
Hart: For applied research and publishing, do you have specific things in mind and how will you approach?
Veregin: First one we’re pursuing is related to Baldwin project. Otherwise, nothing specific at this point. But feel that many activities we engage in have potential for unique perspective that is publishable and could be valuable to research community. Main objective is to outreach and engage with folks trying to do similar things that may not be part of the Wisconsin geospatial community.
Ventura: Internally, how does staff go about prioritization?
Veregin: That’s the next step. Part of the intent of this is to provide the framework for doing this. Staff will continue meeting over the next few months to develop both business plan and process of (at least annual) prioritization.
Veregin: Is there closure on this? Is this a workable document? Any glaring omissions?
Dittmar: Think document does a good job of beginning, to some degree, to put your stake in the sand. Appropriately outlines what the SCO can justifiably stand behind and say this is the right place for it to be accomplished. Would suggest that very question as the final analysis tool – is this a unique activity best situated for the SCO? A very important document.
Hart: Nice at 2 pages, easy to digest. Putting on website is good. What about an accountability section of the website that demonstrates progress over time on these initiatives.
Ventura: Note of caution on stating what can be accomplished with existing resources vs. goals that are dependent upon specific partnerships or external resources/funding. Suggest highlighting initiatives in this way. Avoid over-promising. Add justification/accountability trail.
Kures: Do we have a way to measure progress?
Veregin: Would CSC like to see next draft and comment on it?
Ventura: Not necessary.
Dittmar: On track. Finish it and move forward.
Veregin: Post-meeting, will discuss changes, finalize, and share with CSC before mass release. Additional discussion about how the rationale/justification might go into a separate document.

CSC Composition and Role

Discussion

Veregin: What is the best way to get feedback from CSC?
Ventura: Is it advocacy or guidance that is needed? Happy to contribute as appropriate.
Evans: Own advisory committee meets once per year. Useful to focus on specific topics, like today. Don’t want to tell you how to do your job. Advocacy may depend on issue at hand. Would support 2 meetings per year.
Lacy: What about the question of advocacy versus operational advice?
Hart: May want to be strategic, e.g., DOA appointment.
Kures: Different levels of advocacy possible. Policy versus outreach/communication.
Veregin: Suggest representation by non-traditional GIS sectors.
Evans: Notion of varying membership with emphases.
Mahun: Geographic diversity important to get statewide opinions.
Ventura: May need to reimburse travel.
Schaefer: Solicit Wisconsin Towns Association and specify someone from up north.
Ventura: Consider representation of organizations like WLIA and WIGICC.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm.
Minutes prepared by AJ Wortley and Howard Veregin.