

EVOLUTION OF A NATIONAL TO A GLOBAL SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE:

GSDI – WHERE WE ARE, AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

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To reduce duplication and generally encourage greater efficiency in the collection, use and distribution of US generated digital data, the U.S. Department of the Interior instituted the Federal Geographic Data Committee to implement and promulgate policies and outreach activities for a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) in 1990. The Secretary (Minister) of the Department for the Interior took an active role in the development processes and the program has grown rapidly. In about 1994 or 5, other countries indicated interest in initiating similar activities within their jurisdictions. As Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) activities grew, so did interest in sharing information and data across international boundaries. In turn, regional SDI organisations have grown in the Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Americas, and there is hope to do the same in Africa. Today enough interest has been generated to formalize a fairly large and active group promoting the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) and GSDI Secretariat. The GSDI actively promotes the building of NSDI's through training; limited financial support; encouraging interoperability; facilitating the development of International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) approved standards; and authoring and distribution of guidelines and examples for implementing NSDI activities throughout the world. This year, the fifth annual meeting was held in Cartagena, Columbia chaired by Santiago Borrero-Multis, Chair of the GSDI Steering Committee. Considerable effort was given to evolving the GSDI into a legally incorporated body which will promote the same activities but could also accept and distribute grant monies to those national bodies who can show significant progress in existing SDI activities and/or have enthusiasm and political support to initiate activities within their country/countries. A grant program was announced at the GSDI-5 meeting by Global Map, GSDI, and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) to provide training, software, maintenance, and related support for countries actively pursuing NSDI activities in memory of Dr. John (Jack) Estes, a visionary in the global map community.