

**THE TOPONYMIC POLITICAL OF THE
ARGENTINE NAVAL HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICE
AND ITS NATIONAL DATA BASE SYSTEM**

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Abstract

Toponymics, the study of geographical names, is a branch of Geography which is frequently ignored. Giving a place name is a human phenomenon which satisfies the need for a space reference. Until not long ago the compilation of names was made manually, but the latest technological advances in computation made it possible to process store and analyze large amounts of names. Geographic names are an important part of world cartography. In their oral or spoken form these names are an important part of world cartography. In their oral or spoken form these names are a part of the language and in their written form they are a vital element of the chart or map. In fact, it is impossible to think of charts or maps without geographic names to convey their function of communication. The ARGENTINE NAVAL HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICE (ANHS) is aware of the need to correctly represent the geographic accident as well as its accepted geographic name in all its cartographic documents and publications. Making the official nautical chart is one of the specific tasks of the ANHS. Conscious of the lack of a toponymical order at a national and an international level, this Service has always advocated an urgent regulation of names, together with other countries likewise concerned. Being thus mindful about this topic, the ANHS has built a Data Base which contains ample information. As a contribution to this 17th International Cartographic Conference we will try to give a small account of the progress made by the Toponymic Research Section. This system is still in the making and new will probably be added to it.

1. Toponymic foundation of the Argentine Naval Hydrographic Service (ANHS)

It is a well known fact that each nautical chart is the testimony of a historical moment and a product of the ability shown by the cartographer. A sailor's deed, the formation of a State and even its modification or disappearance are reflected on a piece of paper whose main objective is to let us peep into human events. Cartography is a segment of History frozen in time. A map or chart can be used not only for location but also as a means of research or as a work of art.

The long years between and the first cartographic representation registered by history and the present advances represented by digitalized electronic cartography constitute a well defined period and although different developments could be accounted for within this period, there has always been the same objective; the same objective; the wish to show the surface of the earth for different purposes: military,

economic, scientific, archaeological, historic, demographic, etc.

Nowadays the value of cartography is increasingly appraised and so is the importance of charts or maps when it is necessary to defend geographic interests of strategic value.

The ANHS of the Argentine Republic, as an institution in charge of nautical cartography and coastal toponymics, knows that the territory is the place where the State exercises its real right and that our territory, partly unknown by the majority of its inhabitants, claims for an efficient and precise cartography to sustain our sovereign rights at the time of hypothetical territorial claims. The ANHS is also aware that mistakes due to a lack of knowledge of geography and or cartography by those governed or in government must not lead us to unwise decisions or harmful solutions.

1.1. Jurisdiction of the ANHS as regards geographical names and the legal way of regulating them

By Hydrographic Law 19.922 and its Decree 7633 and specifically in its Article 12. "The ANHS will be in charge of the study of the toponymy of the regions under its jurisdiction with the purpose of adopting the names and their necessary modifications, submitting all conclusions to a Committee of Geographic Coordination (CGC).

It is therefore understood that the national authority which regulates geographical names is the CGC created to that effect on March 24, 1950. The ANHS would like to point out that it stated regulating names several years before the UN Conference for the Normalization of Geographic Names took place in Geneva, from September 4 to September 22, 1967.

The ANHS also understands that a regulated name, according to the recommendation of the 2nd. Conference (London, 1972), is a denomination "officially authorized by a legal organization; a referential system to officially identify geographical names".

Bearing this recommendation in mind and starting from a Data Base, the ANHS made an Argentine Antarctic Nomenclator.

For many years cartographers and geographers have tried to come to an agreement as regards the treatment and preservation of geographic names, (this part of the written language liable to changes of all kinds). There have been endless consultations among professionals first at a national and later at an international level. Not only geographers and cartographers but also linguists, historians and representatives of other sciences have tried to agree on the use of geographic names.

According, the ANHS is aware that all its cartographic documents and publications must correctly show the category of the accident as well as its regulated geographic names. To achieve this aim, toponymic research is done at the Toponymic Section of the Technical Area of the Service, the information in its files is constantly updated and all the geographic names of the regions under the jurisdiction of the Service will be found in the mentioned files. Information to this Section is provided by hydrographic campaigns and other investigations and it is used to clarify doubts and to cooperate with national or foreign organizations. At present intensive work is being done on a Data Base System of geographical names, a process which will allow the ANHS to use a precise geographical glossary in its charts and publications.

1.2. Importance of the normalization of geographic names for the ANHS

Upon the juridic basis that rules its competence in toponymic activities (Hydrographic law 19.922), and after many years of continuous work, the ANHS has named every feature surveyed in different cruises and listed in its pilot charts:

- Derrotero I: Río de la Plata
- Derrotero II: Atlantic Coast. Cabo San Antonio - Punta Dungeness.
- Derrotero III: Archipiélago Fueguino e islas Malvinas
- Derrotero IV: Ríos Paraná, Paraguay, Bermejo, Pilcomayo y Uruguay.
- Derrotero V: Antártida y Archipiélagos Subantárticos

2. An invaluable aid to the normalization and treatment of geographic names: the Data Base System

Different requirements and accessibility problems have combined to lead the way towards the each for a fast and safe technical resource capable of providing the required information immediately. Within the ANHS, the computerizing project began at the end of 1990 and its short-term objective was the creation of a permanent toponymic data base that could replace the original file with paper cards and that could store process and analyze big quantities of names.

The Data Base System provides the following information for each geographic name:

- Normalized name
- Old name
- Variable
- Exonym
- Endonym
- Latitude
- Longitude
- British equivalent name
- Chilean
- USA
- Nautical chart where it can be found
- Pilot chart (publication where it is mentioned)
- Type of geographic feature
- Geographic description of the feature
- History of the name

The Data Base System allows:

- 2.1. To input, to output and to update information.
- 2.2. A particular toponym with certain conditions can be found, for example, it is possible to consult all those names located in a specific area (between 42°25' Lat.S y 45°30' Lat.S and in the same

way for longitude); or all those names under the same feature (e.g. list of all the toponyms that are "bay" or "cape", etc.).

- 2.3. Any consult can be printed.
- 2.4. The stored information can also be consulted according to the following criteria:
 - 2.4.1. By normalized geographic names
 - 2.4.2. By geographic feature
 - 2.4.3. By Pilot Chart (I, II, III, IV and V) within this field, the search can be sorted by normalized name, geographic coordinates or geographic feature
 - 2.4.4. By geographic area
 - 2.4.5. By nautical chart
- 2.5. It also has utilities programs to:
 - 2.5.1. Rearrange the information in case.
 - 2.5.2. Recover toponyms that were deleted by accident.
 - 2.5.3. Make back up copies of the Data Base.
 - 2.5.4. Have access to data of all the lighthouses in the Argentine coast.
- 2.6. To produce lists or reports in the form of Nomenclators and Gazetteers.

This system is still in an optimization period with the aim of achieving several goals:

- a) To minimize confusion and ambiguity in the use of geographic names.
- b) To achieve the national toponymic normalization and within the zone of ANHS jurisdiction in order to eliminate parallel names since it is common to find two or more names for the same feature.
- c) To promote the organization of training courses (in collaboration with other institutions) on the toponymic matter. The ANHS has sponsored and has actively participated in two courses recently:
 - 1993: The ANHS sponsored the creation of the Historical Cartography Department of the Faculty of Hydrological Sciences, Universidad Nacional del Litoral and sent two professionals in Toponymic matter to the "First Litoral Journeys on Toponymy", held in the University (Provincia de Santa Fe).
 - 1994: Two professionals of the ANHS attended the "Second Journeys on Toponymy" held in the Faculty of Humanities of the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste (Provincia del Chaco).
- d) To create a toponymic conscience within the field of cartography. For this purpose, and since 1962, when the ANHS created its School of Cartography to cover the lack of cartographers in our country, the students are aware of the geographic nomenclature question. Precisely, in the third year, the future cartographers attend the course "Cartographic Geography" and in the "Conventional Annual Legal Aspects" Unit. They study the following topics:
 - Toponymy and the need for normalization
 - Principles of Geographic Nomenclature
 - Geocartographic Terminology

- Glossary of usual cartography terms and abbreviations
- National, regional and international organizations on the subject

- e) To achieve a status of continuity necessary for an effective program because normalization must be considered as a continuous process and,
- f) To ensure the cultural heritage for the next generations, since the culture and territory of a community which constitutes its patrimony must be fully protected.