

INTERNATIONAL MAP YEAR

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Abstract

The United Nations (UN) has the custom to announce specific topics to be highlighted during a specific year. ICA should be instrumental in getting the UN to announce an International Map Year in the near future. The main purpose of the International Map Year should be to expose the importance of maps and geographic information for society. Our ever more complex society would be lost without maps. Topographic and geological maps as well as aerial photo products are used in physical planning, in the defense forces and for public use. Socio-economic maps are used to provide better insight in themes ranging from sustainability to the spread of diseases, and help us to mitigate the global differences in the population's access to resources. It is therefore most important that everyone has access to maps and to geographic information, and that they can be easily retrieved and used. The paper will list possible activities that could be included in the International Map Year and will indicate how the ICA with its commissions, National Member Organizations and affiliate members can support the proposed International Map Year. Some examples of proposed activities are:

- Highlighting the nation's achievements in the field of (national) mapping by showing its history:
 - Use of maps and map-based navigation systems for more efficient navigation and transport (including tourism, orienteering and by GPS);
 - Demonstrations of collecting geographic information, mapping and map use;
 - Showing Atlas production as a means of making different information resources comparable;
 - Use of census mapping to show whether the population of a country has equal access to its resources;
 - Showing application of maps in Agriculture and Forestry for a better use of our resources;
 - Standardization of geographical names for finding places;
 - Showing the need for cartography and geo-information courses at all levels of higher education.

The first step should be taken by the Executive Committee of ICA, and it would consist of the creation of a task force or working group with the purpose to elaborate the necessary documents and produce a list of activities for the National Member Organizations and the ICA Commissions. That could be supported by the production of a publication with guidelines and suggestions for the National Members of ICA. ICA could start a contest for the design of posters to announce the International Map Year, national postal authorities could be approached for issuing stamps with maps, and ideas should be developed for a website on the International Map Year. National member organizations with an existing public outreach program should be contacted and asked to share their experiences and provide suggestions.

The second step would be for the EC to contact the UN with the request to establish such an International Map Year. Based on the ideas developed in phase 1, the organization manual and the promotional material developed, the involvement of national organizations and NGO's, the proposal would be hopefully accepted and a year designated as the International Map Year.

Step 3 would consist of the actual effectuation and realization of all the plans, and the final step 4 would be the follow-up, focusing on the lasting results of the increased visibility and awareness engendered during the International Map Year

The Goal

The ICA was established in 1959 and held its first General Assembly in 1961. During these 50 years the ICA has been committed to explore the science and the technology of cartography and the use of maps. But until now, ICA activities have been directed mainly to specialists in cartography. The aim of the International Map Year is to broaden its activities and also involve the general public by showing how cartography and geographic information can help individuals in their daily activities and the development of society. The more specific goals for the proposed International Map Year may be, for the general public, to:

- become aware how maps and map-based products can be used in society, for instance:
- By highlighting the use of maps and map-based navigation systems for more efficient navigation and transport (including tourism, orienteering and GPS);

- By showing how census mapping can help in assessing whether all inhabitants of a country have equal access to its resources;
- By understanding how agriculture and forestry maps can help us finding better use of our resources;
- take cognizance of the nation's achievements in the field of mapping by showing the history and products of National Mapping Organizations;
- understand the importance of a good infrastructure for the provision of geographic information;
- For instance through the standardization of geographical names;
- increased awareness of the need for cartographic experts and of possibilities in cartographic education as well as in the field of geographic information science, for instance:
- By showing how atlas production experts are different information resources comparable;
- By demonstrating how geographic information collecting procedures impact the possibilities for mapping and map use;
- And so showing the need for cartography and geo-information courses at all levels of higher education.

For cartographers in general and for the ICA the benefits of an International Map Year would be:

- an increased visibility of cartography and geographic Information science in society;
- larger numbers of students enrolling in cartographic education as well as in geographic information science.

In order to maintain the International Map Year the ICA should create a working group for preparing the task by:

- Establishing a connection to the UN for announcing the International Map Year;
- Creating a text book that describes cartography and geographic information to the general public;
- Creating a publication with guidelines for National Members of the ICA on how to perform national activities within the framework of the International Map Year;
- Involve ICA commissions and working groups in the organization of these activities;
- Involve ICA affiliate members in organization of these activities as well;
- At a later stage Involve sister organizations;
- Establish a working plan.

It should be possible to make 2015 as the International Map Year, depending on the time needed for UN to establish such 'international years'.

Phasing the International Map Year Project

Activities in the framework of the International Map year project would consist of the following stages or steps: 1 Creation of the task force, 2 Approaching the UN, 3 Effectuation or realization of the International Map Year activities, and 4 Follow-up.

The Creation of the task force in the wake of the Paris ICC should start the planning phase, which should lead within a year to the elaboration of plans, production of support documents, posters, websites, etc necessary for convincing UN in stage 2. Preliminary contacts with UN should be established in order to become aware of the timetable in use by UN for establishing such international years.

Approaching the UN officially would be the task of the EC, which would have to explain the need for an International Map Year (for instance: of all the money allocated in Africa to mapping operations only a minute amount actually trickles down to the African NMCA's); showing them the preliminary steps taken by ICA, the activity plans and supporting material prepared, proposing a budget put together with the help of ICA affiliate members.

Celebrating the actual International Map Year would be the culmination of the proposed activities. It would have to be in a year with an ICA conference. It would need masses of cartographic success stories, showing how by the use of maps beneficial decisions were made, and to this end possibly a temporary ICA press officer would have to be nominated.

The final phase would be the follow-up. The task force or Working Group installed would also have to come up with a list of expected lasting effects of establishing an International Map Year. This list should then be used for structuring the efforts to maintain the increased interest in mapping and map use activities.

Activities in the planning phase

The text book for the general public should give a rather simple description of the whole field of cartography from geodesy and data collection to the creation and use of maps. The book should be understandable for ordinary people and suitable for use as a text book for pupils aged 14 to 16. The chapter on geodesy should explain the shape of the Earth and how GPS/GNSS can be used for finding outdoor

locations. It should also explain how the surface of the earth can be represented on a plane paper. Data collection of geographic information should cover both topographic and thematic information and explain how topographic data are collected from satellites, aero-planes and by terrestrial measurements. Thematic information becomes geographic information when it is connected to topographic information and given a location so it can be depicted on a map. The main part of the text book should deal with cartography, map making and map use. The last part should explain how geographic information can be obtained from different web resources and how different tools that can be used for preparing maps. It would be possible to get sponsorship for producing the text book.

The publication for national members of the ICA must show how to get involved with activities directed to ordinary people. In non-member countries the national mapping organization or a university may take the lead. Official maps shall be listed and it should be explained how they may be accessed. Restrictions must also be noticed. Geographical names are also important. One action – for non-Roman alphabet countries - might be to organize a geographical name committee with commitment to check the national spelling and propose how the geographic names should be spelled in Roman letters.

ICA commissions and working groups may also be involved. The commissions on maps and society, user issues, education and training, and national and regional atlases may be the most obvious ones. The International Map Year may be the start in every country of the establishment of both national and school atlas projects with impetus from the ICA. By supporting higher education it will be easier to find competent persons in the field of cartography and geographic information in the future.

Contacts with the UN, the ICA affiliate members and the sister organizations should also be taken.

Installing the Intended Task Force and the Working Group

The work on the International Map Year may be included as a working group directly directed by the ICA Executive Committee. However, a decision has to be taken during the ICC in Paris, either by the General Assembly or by the Executive Committee whichever name or form the group shall take, it must be created with the following tasks:

- Create a text book on Cartography and Geographic Information for the general public;
- Elaborate plans for national activities and establish national contacts;
- Involve the ICA commissions in the work;
- Find sponsors among the affiliate members;
- Establish contacts with the UN and the sister organizations (through the EC and JBGIS);
- Produce information that can be used at national Map Days;
- Follow up and update the working plan at the ICC in Dresden 2013.

Comments on the national activities

There are big differences in the national attitudes towards maps between the different countries. That may be described in a history of the national map production based on the wide description given in the intended text book. A national list should be given by all countries with information on how the official map series are updated, how they are made available and if there are any restrictions. Each country should manifest the International Map Year with a special Map Day. When Sweden organized the Map Year in 2008 the Map Day was organized in about 60 different municipalities, where national and local maps were displayed together with lectures and demonstrations on how maps are produced and used. In Sweden we found that historical maps have a great interest and in many municipalities exhibitions with historical maps were organized. Other interesting things are land development maps and maps for risk management. Earthquakes, land-slides and high water are risks that may be exposed in maps. Recently we have seen heavy rainfall and land-slides. El-Nino and La-Nina as well as the expected Sea Water can be explored by using maps.



The figures shows the oarganizers of the Map Day in karlstad, Sweden around an aerial photo over the city.

Each country should have a set of national atlases. A school atlas should also be available. Maps tell where resources are located and can be used with different motivations both by politicians and by citizens. Census results can be explained through maps as a complement to the statistical tables. However, maps must be studied with common sense since it is easy to lie with maps (Monmonier, 1996).

Map use is also important in daily life. In countries where public access to maps is limited, ordinary people are not proficient in map reading and do not understand how maps can improve their life. The use of Google maps and GPS for private and professional use in navigation and transportation are good examples on possible improvements. Nowadays more maps than ever are produced via web applications to find the location of objects and an explanation how to reach them.

Geographic names are also important and all maps must have geographical names. The most common map criticisms from ordinary people concern the names used on the maps. Each country has to decide on the national spelling in its own language but also propose a spelling in Roman letters in line with the guidelines from the UN group of experts for on geographical names (UNGEGN). It should be investigated if the UN is willing to support a task group for training in toponymy in order to improve the standardization of geographic names. If so ICA should help to set up such a group.

Education and training in how to build geographical databases and to produce maps and atlases must also be covered in a modern way. The intended text book can be used in schools. University programs must be available for the education of technicians, engineers and masters. All these must be taught in geomatic engineering (geodesy, photogrammetry, remote sensing and cartography as well as how to use adequate software including GIS) courses or applied geography courses. Some countries need support in getting teachers in these fields. The European Union has many programs at master level that can be used to support the provision of teachers, but that needs initiatives from member state universities. In many countries there is a great need of technicians. The International Map Year should include initiatives to enroll students in geomatic engineering. In that field the ICA should intensify the co-operation with the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Society (JBGIS).

Finding National Contacts

ICA has about 80 members. In order to reach non-member countries as well we can ask the help of other organizations. The UN has regional permanent committees in which cartography and geographic information are included for the Americas, and for Asia and the Pacific. In Africa EIS-Africa have contact addresses to all African states in the field of cartography and geographic information. In Europe the national mapping organizations work together in Eurogeographics. Through these organizations addresses can be found so invitation letters and other information can be sent.

Concluding Remarks

This paper only gives some ideas for an International Map Year. The main idea for an International Map Year is to broaden the interest in maps and geographic information in society. In the performance of the International Map Year the ICA has to co-operate with many other international associations, create more cooperation with national organizations, both professional and idealistic ones. The working group must start its work during the conference in Paris. Critical issues are to find sponsors and members willing to

produce a text book. The intention is to celebrate the International Map Year in 2015 and that as many countries as possible organize several Map Days that same year. All together the International Map Year will make the ICA, maps and geographic information better known in society all over the world.

References

Monmonier, Mark (1996): How to Lie with Maps. Chicago University Press.