ICA Commission on Use and User Issues 2007-2011

History

On 13 July 2005, a group of about 30 interested participants of the International Cartographic Conference met in A Coruna, Spain, to discuss the feasibility of establishing a forum to work together on use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination under the ICA umbrella. The meeting agreed that:
- in cartography there is a great interest in use, users and usability;
- it would be very useful to share and develop knowledge on use and user issues in an ICA Working Group;
- the subject of study should not just be map use, but the scope should be broadened to the use and users of, for instance, hardware, software and information systems, interfaces, geographic data and databases;
- therefore, the name of the Working Group should not be "Map Use", but, preferably, "Use and User Issues".

The 13th ICA General Assembly agreed with this and established the Working Group on 16 July 2005. Since then, several successful Working Group activities took place (a.o. seminars in Manchester, Moscow and Warsaw) and on 9 August 2007 in Moscow the 14th ICA General Assembly decided to upgrade the Working Group to an ICA Commission with the following Terms of Reference:

Terms of Reference 2007-2011

- Maintain a website for the exchange of knowledge, news and information on use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination.
- Maintain an on-line bibliographical database. The main categories in this bibliography are: the user, usability (including User Centered Design and methods and techniques of user research) and improvement of user abilities.
- Provide a Web discussion forum.
- Maintain a database of individuals working on, or with expertise in, the various use and user issues and denote it with keywords (similar to the category listings used in the bibliography) to stimulate exchange of information.
- Produce a major publication on use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination (either a special issue of a refereed journal or a text book).
- Foster and stimulate other publications on use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination.
- Organize sessions on use and user issues at future ICA conferences.

- Organize a specialist workshop in 2008 on a focused topic related to use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination.
- Participate in / contribute to other workshops / seminars organized by representatives of other disciplines (e.g. computer science) or by other ICA Commissions / Working Groups.

Organization

A relatively small number of members of the Commission on Use and User Issues took care of the website, bibliographical database, facilitation of the organization of workshops / seminars and all relationships with ICA:

Corné van Elzakker (University of Twente, the Netherlands) (Commission Chair)
David Forrest (University of Glasgow, UK) (Vice-Chair)
Eric Kramers (Natural Resources Canada) (Vice-Chair), who in 2009 replaced Annu-Maaria Nivala (Finnish Geodetic Institute) who had to resign because of a change of job
Alexander Pucher (University of Vienna, Austria) (Vice-Chair)

For the website and online bibliography invaluable help was and is provided by David Schobesberger (Austria), Ben Nausner (Austria) and Jessica Wardlaw (UK). Muki Haklay (UK) and Jenny Harding (UK) played important roles in the organization of several workshops.

It was foreseen that under the wings of this Commission one or more "Project Groups" would emerge that would with a specific aspect of use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination (e.g. on the use of mobile map applications, on methods and techniques of usability research etc.). These Project Groups could come into being as a consequence of the interactions of "corresponding Commission members" through the website and the Project Groups would have to deal with concrete tasks, to be executed within a given time span (e.g. the organization of a workshop or a joint publication). However, the Project Groups idea did not materialize yet during the 2007-2011 term.

Membership

The commission now has more than 100 members from all over the world and from a variety of backgrounds on the mailing list. Almost half of the members are female.

Website

A dynamic website was put into place (see www.univie.ac.at/icacomuse) and kept up-to-date reasonably well. The website is hosted by the University of Vienna and Alexander Pucher is the webmaster. The website supplied information about upcoming and past

meetings, conferences, workshops and other Commission activities and gives access to the materials presented on those occasions. During the term, a section on "Vacancies and PhD positions" was added, but the planned Web discussion forum and expert database did not materialize yet. A major achievement, however, was the establishment of an online bibliography, which is accessible through the website.

Online bibliography

A truly interactive and dynamic online bibliography (not just a static listing of publications) for the Commission's domain has been established on the servers of the University of Vienna by David Schobesberger, supported by Jessica Wardlaw. The site is powered by Aigaion - A PHP/Web based management system for shared and annotated bibliographies. Publications listed in this database focus on the topics use and user research, methods and techniques, usability, as well as improving user abilities, all in the context of cartography and geoinformation science. The aim of this service is to help experts from cartography and geoinformation to inform themselves about user research, usability and user training. Commission core members can enter new annotated entries and allocate keywords (based on the Commission's classification of use and user topics) to these entries. Visitors may interactively search the database in various ways.

Publications

The publications term of reference was already met in 2008 with the publication of a special issue on use and user issues of *The* Cartographic Journal (*2008, Vol.45, No.2*). This ISI publication was edited by the Commission core members (Annu-Maaria Nivala, Alexander Pucher, David Forrest and Corné van Elzakker). The refereed articles were produced by Commission members (Muki Haklay & Antigoni Zafiri; Eric Kramers; Alexander Pucher; Robin Scrimgeour & David Forrest; Annu-Maaria Nivala, Stephen Brewster & Tiina Sarjakoski; Corné van Elzakker, Ioannis Delikostidis & Peter van Oosterom and Chris Perkins).
A major activity of the Commission was the work on a textbook publication on *Research methods and techniques for dealing with use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination*. As this book is not planned to be a mere collection of a variety of chapters produced by authors who submitted proposals, but a real textbook in which different methods and techniques are treated in a standard way, the original deadline (ICC2011 in Paris) could not be met. The completion of the book is the main term of reference for the period 2011-2015.
Although the book *Interacting with Geospatial Technologies*, edited by Commission core member Mordechai (Muki) Haklay (www.wiley.com , March 2010, ISBN 978-0-470-99824-3) cannot be considered as direct Commission output, it can be seen as an indirect consequence of the Commission's activities. The Commission and its members are explicitly acknowledged in the book and more than half of the authors and co-authors of the book chapters is member of the Commission (Muki Haklay, Artemis Skarlatidou, Kate Jones, Anne-Maaria Nivala, Jessica Wardlaw & Stephanie Marsh). Parts of the book

cover the Commission's field of interest and do that very well (in a way that has not been published before, with chapters on, for instance user-centred design, usability engineering and methods and techniques of evaluation and deployment). As such it may not only be considered as complimentary but also as a prelude to the planned Commission book publication on methods and techniques of use, user and usability research.
Commision core members will also have an input (through authoring 2 chapters) in the planned *Cookbook* of the ICA Commission on National and Regional Atlases.

Meetings, conference sessions, workshops

The Commission had 8 business meetings:
- Moscow, Russia – ICC 2007 (plus open meeting)
- Vienna, Austria – 2008 (i.c.w. ICA Art & Cartography Symposium)
- Salzburg, Austria – 2008 (i.c.w. LBS2008)
- Dresden, Germany - 2009 (i.c.w. True-3D in Cartography Symposium)
- Santiago de Chile, Chile – ICC 2009 (plus open meeting)
- London, UK – 2010 (i.c.w. GISRUK)
- Paris, France – Spring 2011 (preparation pre-conference workshop ICC 2011)
- Paris, France – ICC 2011 (plus open meeting)

The Commission organized, formally contributed to, or supported 10 scientific workshops, seminars or conference sessions:

- Moscow, Russia – one use and user issues (oral) session at *ICC 2007*
- Nottingham, UK - support of 1st workshop on *Usability of Geographic Information* (2009)
- Vienna, Austria – session at Deutscher Geographentag (2009)
- Santiago de Chile, Chile – 4 use and user issues (oral) sessions at ICC 2009
- London, UK – support of 2nd workshop on *Usability of Geographic Information* (2010)
- London, UK - one-day pre-conference Workshop on *Methods and Techniques of Use, User and Usability Research in Geo-information Processing and Dissemination* (i.c.w. GISRUK 2010, specifically directed towards the planned book publication).
- Zürich, Switzerland – support of workshop on *Emerging Methods for Studying Use of Spatial Technologies* (i.c.w. GIScience, 2010).
- Southampton, UK – support of 3rd workshop on *Usability of Geographic Information* (2010)
- Paris, France - pre ICC 2011 workshop on *Use and User Issues in Public Transport Geoinformation*
- Paris, France – 6 use and user issues (oral) sessions at ICC 2007

Links to presentations, proceedings and/or other information related to these events can be found on the Commission's website (see www.univie.ac.at/icacomuse).

Co-operation

Outside the bi-annual ICC's, in selecting the places and occasions of the meetings listed above the Commission was keen on exposing itself and its domain to other disciplines: GIS (e.g. GISRUK 2010), GIScience (Zürich, 2010), geography (Vienna, 2009) and transportation studies (Paris, 2011). Special mention should be made of the workshops in Nottingham (2009) and Southampton (2010) in which contact was made with human-computer interaction, ergonomics and usability specialists. These contacts will hopefully be extended in the next term (perhaps through a Commission Project group).
The Commission has also tried to maintain good contacts with other ICA Commissions and Working Groups. To this end, it was also represented at, for instance, the ICA meetings at AutoCarto 2010 in Orlando, USA.

Outreach and capacity building

This commission focuses on research capacity building in a broad sense. Right from the moment of establishment in 2007 one of the formulated key policies was to try to involve in the work of the Commission as many young (PhD) researchers as possible. The Commission started with two vice-chairs working on their PhD and two other PhD researchers have set up the online bibliography on use and user issues the purpose of which is to support other young researchers as well. Young researchers form also a very important target group for the handbook on user research methods and techniques the Commission is currently working on. There is no question of one-way research knowledge flow: young PhD researchers also share their knowledge with others. They will contribute to the handbook and gave presentations at Commission meetings. One proof of the successfulness of the research capacity building policy of the Commission was that half of the 30+ attendants of the open commission meeting at the last ICA conference in Santiago de Chile are currently pursuing a PHD. Another policy goal is to foster the involvement of females in our traditionally male dominated cartographic discipline. This seems to work out well, as almost half of the Commission members are female and about the same ratio is applicable to many Commission events.

Continuation for second term (2011-2015)

The members of the Commission, as well as the Dutch representative body for the ICA (Geo-Information Netherlands), are of the opinion that "use, users and usability" belong to the cornerstones of the activities of the ICA and that the work of the Commission is not yet done. Therefore, they propose the Commission on Use and User Issues goes in for a second term (2011-2015) and nominate Corné van Elzakker to continue to be the Chairman.

Proposed Terms of Reference 2011-2015

- Maintain and expand the website (www.univie.ac.at/icacomuse) for the exchange of knowledge, news and information on use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination

- Maintain and fill the on-line bibliographical database on use and user issues which is accessible through the website (http://www.univie.ac.at/cartography/project/ica_user/bibliography/index.php/topics).

- Set-up and maintain a database of individuals working on, or with expertise in, the various use and user issues and denote it with keywords (similar to the listings used in the bibliography) to stimulate exchange of information. This database will be accessible through the current website.

- Provide a Web discussion forum through the current website.

- Produce *The Handbook for User Research in Geoinformation* (textbook publication focusing on methods and techniques of use, user and usability research in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination).

- Foster, stimulate and contribute to other publications on use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination.

- Organize (or help organizing) sessions on use and user issues at future ICA conferences.

- Establish one or more "Project Groups" that deal with a specific aspect of use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination. The Project Groups will execute concrete tasks within a given time span.

- Organize (or help organizing) specialist workshops or seminars on focused topics related to use and user issues in cartography and geo-information processing and dissemination.

- Participate in / contribute to other workshops / seminars organized by representatives of other disciplines (e.g. human computer interaction, computer science) or by other ICA Commissions / Working Groups.

- Involve young (PhD) researchers in all Commission activities.

Proposed "core group" 2011-2015

To our regret, Eric Kramers would like to step back as Vice-Chair. He has made a substantial contribution to the work of the Commission and brought in his expertise with user-centred design of the Atlas of Canada. We always enjoyed working with Eric and have learned a lot from him. We are happy that he wants to continue working with us on the completion of the book publication.

We are also happy that we have found a very suitable replacement for Eric: Kristien Ooms from Ghent University in Belgium (yes, PhD candidate ánd female). The other members of the Commission "core group" want to continue for a second term as well.

Therefore, this is the proposed composition of the "core group" 2011-2015:

- Corné van Elzakker (University of Twente, Faculty ITC, The Netherlands) – Chair (elzakker@itc.nl)
- David Forrest (University of Glasgow, Department of Geographical & Earth Sciences, United Kingdom) – Vice-Chair (david.forrest@ges.gla.ac.uk)
- Kristien Ooms (Ghent University, Department of Geography, Belgium) – Vice-Chair (kristien.ooms@ugent.be)
- Alexander Pucher (University of Vienna, Department of Geography and Regional Research, Austria) – Vice Chair (alexander.pucher@univie.ac.at)
- David Schobesberger (david.schobesberger@univie.ac.at) and Jessica Wardlaw (j.wardlaw@ucl.ac.uk) (website and online bibliography)

CvE, DF, EK, KO, AP, 21-06-2011