

ISO TC-211 in the Americas

Latin America is on the rise. Last year marked the 200th anniversary of the start of its struggle for political independence and democracy. Regardless of the global economic crisis, economies here have grown over the past decade at an annual average 6%, with low inflation. There remains, however, singular inequality of distribution, so still much to do.¹

Within this context, and that of spatial information and development, the contribution of the Pan American Institute for Geography and History (PAIGH) to capacity building is significant. Between 2006 and 2010 the Institute funded 68 international workshops, printed over eighty publications, granted 407 scholarships and implemented 178 technical cooperation projects, including annual realisation of more than one international event encouraging development of regional spatial information infrastructures (SDI). But SDI in the Americas is still incipient, and greater formalisation of NSDIs is needed, including the seamless geodata transcending national borders required to support regional integration.

A key issue here is standardised core databases, and since 2004 ISO TC 211 and PAIGH have been collaborating to this end. Joint initiatives like the Latin American Metadata Profile (LAMP) Project and the ISO Geographic information/Geomatics Standards Guide in Spanish, are good examples. Cooperation with active committee member Spain is also increasing.

PAIGH 2010-2020 Agenda priorities focus on climate change, territorial organisation and natural disasters. The GeoSUR Program led by the Latinamerican Development Bank (CAF) and PAIGH is fostering the development and application of spatial databases. More than 55 national and regional institutions are currently participating, with more invited to join. The SDI geoservices developed in association with GeoSUR are fully decentralised and available on the web at no cost to the user. According to CAF programme coordinator Eric Van Praag, GeoSUR is the first SDI initiative to develop a portal providing access to geographic information from all South American countries and the Processing Service the first of its type in the developing world. The GeoSUR portal provides access today to more than eighty WMS services, thirty maps viewers and ten metadata catalogues.

As reported to the ISO TC 211 Plenary held recently in Delft, GeoSUR is currently expanding to Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, which implies its consolidation as the geospatial network of Latin America and the Caribbean. This comes as a direct consequence of PAIGH/CAF partnering for the benefit of the geospatial community in the Americas. For more information visit: www.geosur.info.

1 Nobody's Backyard. The Economist, September 2010 Special Report on Latin America