

On the Naming of Parts

The ICA Commission on National and Regional Atlases has been in existence since 1985, reflecting the importance of such products in compiling, integrating, synthesising and presenting spatial information on major political entities. The new chair of the Commission elected in August 2007, Peter Jordan of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna, has already acknowledged its history and drawn up plans for its future.

In connection with the former, there was recognition of the Commission in November 2007 during festivities marking the retirement of Professor Ferjan Ormeling from his illustrious career as Professor of Cartography at Utrecht University. Ferjan had been a longstanding member of the commission, in addition to being secretary-general and treasurer of ICA from 1999-2007, and a symposium "De Nationale Atlas als toegangspoort tot de geodata infrastructuur" (The National Atlas as access portal to the geodata infrastructure) was held in his honour. Present too were previous chairs of the commission, including eminent cartographers Bengt Rystedt (Sweden) and Tim Trainor (USA).

At this gathering the Commission developed further plans for 2008, including steps towards the production of its 'Cookbook for Atlas Editors', intended as an international guide to the preparation and production of national and regional atlases. An editorial board has already been established and met in Vienna in January 2008. Authors have been invited to contribute, and the project will be firmed up at the next meeting of the Commission in Timisoara, Romania, in September 2008.

The main focus of the meeting in Romania will be the nature of geographical names in national and regional atlases. The rendering of geographical names with specific characteristics – scientific/popular, conventional/digital, international/national – will be considered. This is particularly appropriate as taking place immediately prior to the meeting will be a linked gathering of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names (UNGEGN). Specifically, the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms will be developing further guidelines for the use of exonyms. These are names of locations commonly given them by those who do not live there (e.g. the names Florence, Londres, Kopenhagen), and they are of significant interest to cartographers worldwide. ICA already has strong links with the UN Group; the aforementioned Ferjan Ormeling is currently a vice-chair of UNGEGN, and the important work of this group has a clear impact on those engaged in the development of national and regional atlases, along with many other cartographers. Similarly, the daily work of cartographers feeds into UN deliberations in this area. All interested geomatics professionals are invited to 'The UN/ICA Week on Geographical Names', to take place in Timisoara from 9th to 13th September 2008. Further information may be obtained from the commission chair, peter.jordan@oeaw.ac.at.

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