

Relationships with Others

A Web-sourced definition of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is "a written document executed by the parties which establishes policies or procedures of mutual concern. It does not require either party to obligate funds and does not create a legally binding commitment." Learned societies in the fields of science and technology inevitably have areas of common interest, either as part of their constitution, or over some shorter time period when issues of mutual significance are addressed by more than one society. In addition, such societies may find that statutory, government and commercial agencies are also interested in particular topics of common concern.

ICA is no exception. As one of a number of geomatics-oriented associations, it has joined the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JBGIS). Specialised links with particular organisations within the Joint Board have advanced the agenda of co-operation in specific areas. For example, the MoU signed in January 2004 between ICA and the International Hydrographic Office (IHO) confirmed a commitment to the work of the joint FIG-IHO-ICA International Advisory Board on Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers. Themes of mutual interest identified in the MoU signed by FIG and ICA in September 2001 included:

- geographic information and its management and standardisation
- topographic and hydrographic mapping
- special applications of positioning and navigation to mapping and GIS
- internet-publishing of maps
- history of mapping and cartography
- education and scientific research
- role of under-represented groups in international organisations
- transfer of management and technology to developing countries.

There are issues common to all the bilateral MoUs to which ICA has put its signature. Each organisation recognises the other as an "international organisation with many complementary activities serving similar professional constituencies." This naturally allows for "maintaining and increasing of the opportunities of scientific, technical and professional, as well as academic and educational, exchange between their members, through a continuing programme of co-operation leading to mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise to the advantage of both organisations." This covers information exchange about meetings and possible joint sponsorship of activities.

ICA has recently expanded its range of MoUs. In March 2004, Sergio Camacho-Lara (director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs) signed an agreement with ICA specifically to tackle issues such as supporting developing countries, promoting space-supported systems and increasing awareness of the use and applications of global navigation satellites. Such applications in early warning and disaster management were recognised and soon brought into focus by the December 2004 tsunami. Further MoUs have been signed with a trans-national governmental body, the Pan American Institute for Geography and History based in Mexico City, and with an academic research grouping, the Geographical Information Systems International Group, based in Genova, Italy. In each MoU international organisations have pledged to co-operate to drive forward activities in geomatics.