

Embracing Cultural Differences in a Global Spatial Data Infrastructure: Findings and Recommendations from Atlantic Institute Think Tank 6

Dr. David J. Coleman
Department of Geodesy and Geomatics Engineering
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, New Brunswick, CANADA E3B 5A3

Professor Harlan J. Onsrud
Department of Spatial Information Science and Engineering
University of Maine
Orono, Maine USA 04469-5711

Santiago Borrero Mutis, M.Sc.
Secretary-General, Pan American Institute of Geography and History
Ex-Arzobispado 29
Col. Observatorio
11860 México, D.F.
México

Abstract

The 6th Atlantic Institute Think Tank Meeting was held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge (Boston), Massachusetts USA, August 17-19 2005. A major goal of this workshop was to explore those choices and to identify options that advance standardization and a global spatial data infrastructure while embracing and promoting cultural diversity. Co-sponsored by the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association: North America, the Think Tank brought together noted authorities from eleven countries to: (1) explore technological options for information infrastructure development and standardization that yet allow for local adaptation, control, and retention of cultural diversity; and (2) identify the "different lenses" through which spatial data infrastructure efforts are viewed by professionals from different cultures -- cultures that may be influenced by ethnic, national and disciplinary perspectives. Follow-on discussions and breakout sessions discussed options strategies for finding common ground, articulating development and research needs, and moving ahead together.

This paper presents the results of that Meeting. After discussing some of the preliminary challenges, the authors summarize major points and key recommendations emerging from sessions dealing with discussions of alternate technological, cultural and disciplinary visions.