

**Meeting 4
GLA, London
07 December 2009**

Attendees:

Chris Ashford (Chair) (ONS, Census)
Richard M Smith (ONS)
Vincent Moynihan (ONS)
Alan Lewis (SASPAC)
Brendan Davis (ONS, Census)
Dave Blythe (ONS - NeSS)
Oliver Duke-Williams (DFN)
Paul Richards (ONS IM)
Sinclair Sutherland (NOMIS)
Mark Ireland (NOMIS)
James Reid (EDINA)
Ed Turnball (GROS)
Rob Collins (GROS)
Jo Ellis (OPSI)
Pablo Mateos (UCL)
Oliver O'Brien (UCL)
Muki Haklay (UCL)

Apologies:

Justin Hayes (CDU)
Rob Dymond (CDU)
Cathryn Mcburney (NISRA)
Rachel Moreton (DCLG)
Bill Oates (WAG)
Richard Elliott (NISRA)
Callum Foster (SESAG)
Jim Wretham (OPSI)

1. Minutes of last meeting and actions arising

The minutes and outstanding actions of previous CWSWG meetings were reviewed, updated as needed, and accepted.

2. Administration & communication

Chris Ashford reported an updated draft of the Terms of Reference for the group which are available on the CWSWG website.

Action: All members who have not already commented on the revised draft are invited to do so in advance of the next meeting when the Terms of Reference are due annual review and revision.

3. Reports from web services

Brief verbal updates were provided by the web service groups represented (NeSS, ONS Web Development Programme (WDP), NOMIS, EDINA, DFN, SASPAC, GROS, UCL).

Each update reviewed the recent activities and current development progress of each service, and highlighted a number of useful topics and issues covered in discussions throughout the meeting.

NeSS

Update included a short presentation of NDE v1.2, which incorporates use of Adobe Flex and supports delivery requests in SDMX and RDF formats.

A brief discussion covered issues affecting speed of service vs. the volume and granularity of data query, and the influence and affect of hardware on the performance and service functionality.

Action: Dave Blythe to request and report on information from ONS Geography about 2011 boundary download and availability.

ONS Web Development Programme (WDP)

Following an update presentation covering recent progress with the WDP, a lengthy group discussion covered the issues associated with disclosure control methodology (DCM) and the application to flexible cross tabulation in data cubes. Also covered were the related implications of an unprecedented scale and ease of access to multiple datasets that can be easily and seamlessly integrated. Questions were raised over the need for a more integrated and global consideration of DCM that encompasses more than just individual isolated datasets.

NOMIS

Small updates to add functionality and improve metadata have been applied to the generic SDMX service being developed by NOMIS (and discussed at the previous meeting). Issues have been identified with inconsistencies in the repeat use of classification and geographic codes that appear across the different subsets of data.

NOMIS intend to make available a public demonstration version of their current development in February 2010.

A discussion covered the content, deadlines and requirements of the Cabinet Office Linked Data Initiative. The specific questions raised covered what is included as recommendation and what is mandatory, and whether it is policy that RDF is a strict requirement. A meeting due to be led in February by Simon Field (ONS) is scheduled to discuss such issues.

Action: Paul Richards to progress a technical level sub-meeting to address standards, RDF and associated issues.

EDINA

UKBORDERS delivers 2001 and earlier Census geography outputs (boundaries, lookup-tables and latterly NSPD) using OGC interfaces (WFS and WMS) to service a web client application. This provides real time data delivery and on the fly conversion, but some compromise is needed in order to achieve scalability, and there are issues of what schema / GML profile to publish to. Ultimately users tend to reconvert back to popular formats such as Shape/MIF/MID.

The Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) currently represents something of unknown quantity. It may affect Universities as both providers and consumers of data, but to what extent is not yet clear. EDINA, as part of the EU funded ESDIN project, are conducting some INSPIRE compliance testing using various data providers such as the Ordnance Survey.

After the EDINA update, a short discussion covered the issues associated with 3rd party redistribution of data derived from that produced by ONS, which is itself derived from OS base products. This means having to point academics at ONS to get data that could easily be otherwise supplied by 3rd parties if permitted by OS. The complexity in current licensing arrangements with the census offices for boundary products was also addressed. These involve at least 12 'special conditions' that users must sign up to. Streamlining the licensing, harmonizing across the census agencies, and a more liberal interpretation of what constitutes derived data would be desirable.

DFN

Discussions at the recent CAG meeting covered issues relating to exactly what users want from data feeds. These have prompted the need for future ESRC meetings which will be arranged shortly.

The topic of future Origin-Destination statistics was raised, with specific uncertainties relating to exactly what might be available – whether these might be similar or substantially different from those in 2001. The issues of what might be considered confidential and therefore require controlled access were also raised, and clearer and more detailed information in this area is needed.

SASPAC

Since the last meeting, the development of the SASPAC interface with the NDE demonstrated in the video that was presented have undergone periods of user testing. The results will contribute to further future developments, which should start to focus on interfacing with the WDP API sometime next year.

GROS

GROS do not intend to follow the approach adopted by ONS to develop their own data access API. GROS are interested in monitoring developments and ONS progress, but are themselves concentrating on investigating COTS (commercial off-the-shelf) products / APIs as possible solutions for online dissemination. GROS are working with SpaceTime Research - the vendors of the SuperSTAR software suite - on a prototype based on the SuperVIEW API and toolkit. This prototype will be presented at the fifth meeting of the group in March 2010. GROS are planning to represent selected 2001 Census outputs in future dissemination prototypes as a means of stimulating and assessing user response.

UCL

The UK Census Geographic Information Visualisation (Censusgiv) project is part of an ESRC Census Development grant based at University College London (UCL). The project is developing prototype geovisualisation of Census data alongside creative web interfaces, using new mapping mashup technologies and applications including GMapCreator, www.londonprofiler.org, and EducationProfiler, as well as opensource software and services, such as www.openstreetmap.org. These offer the prospect of comprehensive profiling of the population in ways that can be used by the public to understand local geographies, and by government to improve public service delivery. The presentation by Pablo Mateos and Oliver O'Brien summarised progress towards developing a prototype mapping mashup for flexible and intuitive geographic visualisation of 2011 Census and administrative data at small area level. The main technical, cartographic and intellectual property constraints faced in making a large and complex dataset available to a mass audience were also mentioned. The prototype will be available to selected users for evaluation from February 2010. A first feel for the interface can be gleaned from www.censusprofiler.org

4. Discussions

Formalising development of applications by Census Offices and external developers

Members are encouraged to informally continue discussions via correspondence or the website, and an update on more formal collaboration or partnership working will be presented at the next meeting.

Licensing Solutions for Public Sector Information

Jo Ellis from OPSI provided a comprehensive overview of the developments and drive towards improving licensing arrangements in the last 10 years. Extending into current and future initiatives, current plans involve development and introduction of a tailored creative commons arrangement. This prompted group discussion about the type of commons upon which this will be based, and, as some require a greater level of attribution than others, the consequent affects on code volume padded into services etc. The potential extension of such commons based relationships to peripheral elements such as OS or other related material was also discussed, with obstacles noted, and consensus that these might be unsurpassable.

5. Next meeting

The next CWSWG meeting will be held in March and mark the first anniversary of the group. The proposed location for the meeting is Edinburgh, with the specific venue and date to be determined in early 2010. Details will be added to the website and forwarded to group members.