

## **Chapter VIII**

# **Collection Management Issues with Geospatial Information**

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## **Introduction**

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Among the most challenging aspects of GIS are identifying needs, acquiring resources, and managing the collection, a process that involves decision making in a dynamic and changing environment. Libraries that have traditionally collected maps have a good grounding in many of the issues, yet even they must learn new approaches, new technology, and think beyond the needs of traditional map users. Librarians will find challenges throughout the life of geospatial information, from its acquisition to its disposition, especially as a library collection migrates from a primarily print format to a focus on digital formats.

Building a digital geographic data collection from scratch and acquiring computer software and hardware systems in which to manage and display the geographic information is becoming standard practice. In a study conducted on the integration of GIS in academic libraries that are a part of Carnegie Classification Master's Colleges and Universities I and II, there was significant interest in the use of implementing

GIS services to support academic endeavors (Kinikin & Hench, 2005). However, building such a collection does not mean that librarians must build it in a void. An extensive tradition of collecting geographic materials exists in both public and academic libraries for outlining strategies to build new collections (Larsgaard, 1998; Ristow, 1980). How GIS is used throughout higher education has prompted libraries to examine the issue of providing digital geospatial data resources and services. This chapter will address collection development issues for geospatial data, including establishing a collection development policy, determining user needs and their relationship to resource development, building digital and print geospatial collections, issues in collecting data at the local, state, and federal levels, archival concerns, and legal and licensing considerations.

## **Creating a Collection Development Policy**

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Central to the planning process of either adding geospatial information to an existing library collection or assembling a primarily digital geospatial information collection is the creation of a collection development policy. A collection development policy is the instrument a librarian creates and then utilizes that not only defines the collection, but also is a guide to the ongoing management of the collection. Evans and Saponaro (2005) define collection development defined as a “process of making certain the library meets the information needs of its service population in a timely and economical manner, using information resources produced both inside and outside of the organization” (p. 70). Further, “effective collection development requires creating a plan to correct collection weaknesses while maintaining its strengths” (Evans & Saponaro, 2005, p. 70). Therefore, an effective collection development policy is an action plan that is used to assist staff in the acquisition and decision-making process (Evans & Saponaro, 2005).

In their discussion of collection management issues and electronic collections, Pettijohn and Neville (2003) add that “collection development represents not just the acquisition of information, but a strategic investment in knowledge” (p. 21). They feel that the guiding principles, goals, and strategies of this process are formally stated in collection development policies (Pettijohn & Neville, 2003). Further, these policies are based upon an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the collection, the availability of shared resources, and the information needs of the community. To define subject coverage, depth, level, and scope, librarians emphasize or exclude specific subject areas, languages, formats, and genres (Evans & Saponaro, 2005). Existing collection development policies may be adapted for use in selecting electronic resources or revised to consider additional formats, features, and evaluative criteria. Policies must consider the virtual library from a dual perspective; it is both a dynamic collection in its own right and a hybrid collection

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