

ХРОНИКА

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ГОД КАРТЫ 2015–2016

INTERNATIONAL MAP YEAR 2015–2016

In my understanding the geoinformation disciplines, thus all of us dealing with geodata, geoinformation, spatial analysis, geodata infrastructures, cartography and maps are lacking sometimes the acceptance, understanding and acknowledgement of experts of other domains, decision makers, the public. Sometimes it is not immediately clear to somebody outside our field, why what we are doing is relevant, important and underpinning so many processes of our life, our society, our economy.

I argue, that this can be improved. I argue, that by being outspoken and pro-active we might be able to increase the understanding of the relevance and importance of our work, our projects, our products, of – in general – the power of geodata, geoinformation and maps.

How can this be done, and how can this be done best? I argue, that by synchronizing efforts this might be best. Such synchronization should be done on the highest level possible, and this is exactly what happens currently, because at the fourth session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at the UN Headquarters in New York, 6.-8. August 2014, the ICA Initiative on an International Map Year 2015/16 was positively discussed. As it reads in the resolution:

The committee endorses the International Map Year 2015–2016 as proposed by the International Cartographic Association as a valuable means to promote the importance of maps and Geoinformation.

Why are the United Nations interested in this? Well, efficient handling of geographic information is of vital importance for dealing with many of the current problems facing the world, such as climate change, natural disasters, environmental quality, pandemics, wars, famines, population displacement, migration and economic crises. These problems are cross-border challenges of a global nature that require global, regional and national policy responses, and need cartography and geographic information for being handled in an efficient way.

The main purpose of the International Map Year (IMY) is to expose the importance of maps and geographic information in the society. Our ever more complex society would be lost without maps and a proper use of geographic information. Topographic and geological maps as well as aerial photo products are used by the public for information and orientation but also by many professional organisations in fields such as physical planning and defence forces. Socio-economic maps are used to provide better insight in themes ranging from sustainability to the spread of diseases, and help us to mitigate the global differences in the population's access to resources. It is therefore most important that everyone has access to maps and to geographic information, and that maps and geographic information can be easily retrieved and used.

The concept of the International Map Year (IMY) is therefore to illustrate the general public as well as decision-makers the importance of using and making maps in a global context. It will also be in line with the Rio+20 Agenda signed by the UN Secretary General. The International Map Year will be formally launched at the International Cartographic Association's conference in Rio de Janeiro, August 23, 2015, and will continue until the end of 2016. The planning for national events associated with the International Map Year has started in the beginning of 2015.

IMY has four target groups: the general public, school children, professionals and governments and activities can include every action that is related to the aim of illustrating the using and making maps. The objective of the United Nations resolution really is to provide recognition by the United Nations and Member States of the importance of maps and geospatial information for society; encouraging member states on further support in making maps and geospatial information more accessible; motivating member states to improve the overall knowledge of the general public in the availability of maps in their nation and how to use maps and geospatial information and providing recognition among cartographic professionals and local governments on the status of their work.

Activities in the context of the IMY might include dedicated map days (maybe in conjunction with GIS days), map exhibitions, mapping parties, demonstrations of map use, map production demonstrations, local mapping activities in the realm of planning, infrastructure, maintaining and other, historical map exhibitions, Barbara Petchenik children map competition, cartographic activities for education, schools and children, lectures about the use of geospatial information, demonstrations of GPS, OSM, geocaching and mashups, map use exercises, activities in the context of entertainment with maps, storytelling with maps, confronting artistic activities with maps and cartography just to name a few of the envisioned and planned activities.

And here is how you can help! Just be part of the International Map Year 2015/16! Whenever you are somehow related to the usage or making of maps and you want to illustrate the importance of using and making maps to whoever, let us know, share it, document it, do it. To highlight the importance of maps to decision makers as well as to neighbours lead eventually to a better understanding and awareness of all «geo-domains», thus all of us will benefit. <http://internationalmapyear.org/>

Check out mapyear.org and www.icaci.org to find out more!

About the Author:

Georg Gartner is a Full Professor for Cartography at the Vienna University of Technology. He holds graduate qualifications in Geography and Cartography from the University of Vienna and received his Ph.D. and his Habilitation from the Vienna University of Technology. He was awarded a Fulbright grant to the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1997 and a research visiting fellowship to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2000, to South China Normal University in 2006 and to the University of Nottingham in 2009. He is responsible organizer of the International Symposia on Location Based Services and editor of the Book Series «Lecture Notes on Geoinformation and Cartography» by Springer and editor of the Journal on LBS by Taylor & Francis. He serves as President of the International Cartographic Association.