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Chapter XII

The Internet, the State Library, and the Implementation of Statewide Information Policy: The Case of the NYS GIS Clearinghouse

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ABSTRACT

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Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are used by government, researchers and businesses in a wide range of domains including economic development, environmental management, education, health, human services, infrastructure management, and disaster response. Most experts agree that the most expensive part of a GIS program is the creation of spatial data. Some estimate that as much as 80% of the cost of any application is attributable to the expenses of acquiring and geocoding information (Thapa & Bosler, 1992). Often the information needs of different GIS applications overlap and data created by one organization can be used by others. Data

sharing can therefore help reduce costs of GIS application develop-
ment and yield considerable benefits and efficiencies. To achieve
this purpose, the State of New York has implemented a GIS Coordi-
nation Program which features an Internet-based GIS Clearing-
house operated by the New York State Library (Dawes & Eglene,
1998). In this program, the Library acts as a critical implementer
and value-added facilitator of an important new state information
policy that has influence over spatial data development, exchange,
and use at all levels of government and in the private and not-for-
profit sectors. The Clearinghouse provides the conceptual frame-
work and operational platform for a fully functioning data coopera-
tive which is the heart of the New York State GIS Data Sharing
Policy. The library-based clearinghouse has become the essential
portal to many newly identified information resources. It organizes
the data descriptions, provides a publicly available and easy-to-use
means of access, promotes sharing, points the way to education and
other services, and generally makes possible the vision of a living
data resource.

LIBRARIES AND GIS
INFORMATION RESOURCES

Library services related to GIS are a recent development and have
been the subject of some research and much experimentation during the
1990s, mostly as an extension of traditional library functions. Much of the
literature focuses on providing GIS services directly to library patrons (see
for example, Boisse & Larsgaard, 1995; Abbott & Argentati, 1995). Soete
(1995) notes key decisions that library planners must make about GIS
services: what kind of service, how to build collections, staffing, learning
and education programs, partnerships, data storage methods, and costs. In
making these decisions, libraries need to attend to both general public
(Gluck, 1996) and nontraditional (Argentati, 1997) user needs, to building
relationships with other GIS experts (Cobb, 1995), and to providing
convenient means of access to spatially referenced information, as well as
primary and secondary literature on GIS (Longstreth, 1995). Others
emphasize the shift that GIS represents from "documents" to "data sets,"
and discuss the importance of collecting, describing, and accessing spatial
data (Lamont, 1997; Hunt & Joselyn, 1995) through use of the national
standards for geo-spatial metadata (Domartz, 1995).

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