

GEOinformatics

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- Leica TPS 1200+
- GeoBIM
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- ESRI EMEA User Conference
- Magellan's latest GPS Tools

Data Discovery

While the Shapefile and KML have both helped with data sharing, there is limitless volumes of content that remains inaccessible to users. For a variety of reasons, the content is either locked up in proprietary formats (DWG, ESRI File Geodatabase, MapInfo TAB) or is not indexed by search engines. Paul Bissett of WeoGeo calls this “hidden content” and claims that while there are approximately 800 TB of discoverable data out there, 91,000 TB of digital content is not indexed and in turn not discoverable. This means that only 0.009% of digital content is searchable and if we equate this number to my local library with over 500,000 books, it means that I could only find 4,400 of them – a massive failure of the Dewey Decimal system!

Data discovery and accessible content is important to the successful integration of the GeoWeb into our workflows. Unfortunately, we are probably missing critical datasets that could help us design tools to visualize problems or solve questions. A client asked me the other day what web services were available for their project and wanted to get a list for a

meeting she was having with her staff. The question highlights the challenge confronting us – where do we go to find spatial data services on the web?

Google is attempting to index this “hidden content” but they cannot do it alone. ESRI and Google have teamed up to make ESRI’s web services discoverable by Google and other projects such as GeoServer have also worked to make their services discoverable by Google’s Geo Search API. This is a great start, but it still requires owners of the content to enable their discovery by Google, Microsoft or Yahoo! Some data owners would not benefit from making their data discoverable because of a variety of reasons including security, proprietary concerns and development costs. But for the data that is available, we need a Google search for spatial data, and we need the equivalent of Amazon.com for selling data.



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