

# Usability of OpenSource Datasets for National and Regional Atlas Mapping

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## Abstract

The use and availability of geographic information has grown rapidly in recent years. Instead of organisation creating their own data or going to a commercial supplier, there is now a wide range of freely available data. The question is, is this data usable in a map production environment? The focus here is on looking at a range of OpenSource datasets mainly at smaller scales for use in creating the topographic base for the range of maps that might be found in a national or regional atlas (either print or on-line).

Usability research in GI has tended to focus on system and software, or how the data should be presented to facilitate use of applications. Very little work has examined the usability of the underlying data and standard usability research methods do not necessarily work for assessing data usability.

The study examines the data model and documentation of the Global Mapping Project and the EuroGlobalMap product. An assessment is made of the content and coding of these datasets and a heuristic evaluation of their usability carried out. A brief comparison is also made with a commercial dataset. All three datasets are targeted as topographic base information for maps around 1:1 million scale.

The overall conclusion is that without significant effort on the part of the user to manipulate the data, the OpenSource datasets are not appropriately structured and classified to enable their application in map and atlas design and production.