

DRAFT CUSTODIANSHIP POLICY

CSI Policy Sub Committee

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The functioning of society depends upon information and its efficient communication among the society's members. Information and its effective communication determine the economic efficiency, industrial and productive processes of a nation. Information is widely recognized as the most critical and essential of corporate resources. The full potential of this resource can only be realized if it is accessible and used appropriately by those that require it.

The information needs of both the public and the private sector can be satisfied by a balanced deployment of information technology and policies, which recognize and address information issues. The combination of digital data and communication networks does not only provide solutions to some of the perceived inadequacies and inequities relating to information, but also results in a number of problems which could threaten some of the basic rights assumed in our free and democratic society. The solutions to these problems require a development of policies which address access, copyright, and pricing issues, while at the same time promoting the exchange and sharing of data / information.

This policy document outlines the responsibilities and rights of data custodians in managing and promoting the use of spatial information. Custodianship is the collection and management of data by an organization or part of an organization on behalf of the wider community or the larger organization. Custodians have some responsibilities and are entitled to certain rights.

A data custodian is an organ of state as recognized by the Committee for Spatial Information, having the responsibility to ensure that a base data set is collected and maintained according to specifications and priorities determined in consultation with the CSI and the user community, and being made available to the community in a format that conforms to standards and policies established by the CSI. Custodians shall be regarded as trustees of the information.

Custodians are responsible for the processes and functions of data capture, validation and maintenance, including the principles and procedures for accuracy, currency, data storage and security.

2.0 Co-operation and co-ordination principles

Due to the limited resources available to the country, many government departments are currently experiencing budget constraints. It is therefore imperative to promote efficient, economic and effective use of resources by sharing data and information, as enshrined in the constitution (Section 195 (1b)). This requires commitment from the CSI, custodians, and users towards the maintenance, accessibility and distribution of spatial data.

Section 41 of the constitution involves the principles of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations. Sub section 1(h) requires all spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere to co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by fostering friendly relations; assisting and supporting one another; informing one another of, and consulting one another on, matters of common interest; co-ordinate their actions and legislation with one another; adhering to agreed procedures; and avoiding legal proceedings against one another.

The sharing and exchange of data/information will eliminate duplication of data capture and cost to government and the public. Duplication can only be eliminated through coordination and cooperation among custodians and users of spatial information.

- Custodians shall work together to facilitate data and information sharing in order to avoid duplication of data capture and cost to Government.
- Custodians shall capture spatial information guided by the majority of user needs. Custodians should, where possible be guided by common user needs when capturing or updating spatial information.

- Custodians shall commit to the maintenance, validation, description and accessibility of spatial data/information where applicable.
- Custodians shall manage spatial data in a way that facilitates data sharing and use by other custodians and users.
- Custodians shall disseminate spatial data at least in an internationally recognised open and published format that maximizes the usefulness of the data.
- *Data custodians are accountable for the integrity of unmodified spatial information which is supplied by the data vendor in terms of the SDI Act.*

2.1 Access principles

Access is a fundamental issue in the exchange of data. Information is valuable when it becomes accessible to the user. However, having access to volumes of information alone will not solve the user's problem unless he/she knows and understands the limitations of the information and applies proper procedures. It is therefore necessary for all custodians to capture metadata for their data holdings. Metadata does not only provide information needed to process and interpret data. Custodian liability could be minimized through the use of metadata (including lineage) documentation. Metadata avoids legal proceedings against one another.

The principle of access to information is rooted in section 32(1a & b) of the constitution (“*Everyone has the right of access to any information held by the state and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any right*”). Access to information is necessary for the development of and promotion of an informed public, an accountable government, improving decision and service delivery and is of great benefit to society as a whole. When dealing with information, it is important to distinguish between the concept of access to information and that of disclosure or non-disclosure. Access to information occurs when the public is provided with information, to which they are legally entitled upon their request. Disclosure occurs when information is made available to the public in one or more places.

- Custodians should disclose or make information available to the public on request unless it is exempted under the Promotion of Access to Information Act.
- Any spatial data/information that is disclosed or made available must include the Metadata component.
- *Custodians must register their projects on the project register prior to undertaking the project and update the register when changing status.*
- Custodians should make their conceptual data model available to the public on request.
- In providing access to spatial information, custodians should ensure that the privacy of individuals is protected in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act.
- Custodians should ensure that reasonable security measures are in place to avoid loss, unauthorized access, modification and disclosure of personal data.
- Custodians should ensure that their Metadata is available to the public by establishing a node at the NSIF Spatial Data Discovery Facility, or make their Metadata records available to the NSIF for inclusion into the Spatial Data Discovery Facility

2.3 Adherence to standards

- Custodians should adhere to National and International standards for spatial information in promoting interoperability.
- Custodians must capture Metadata for the data they hold.
- Metadata should at least conform to the international ISO 19115 metadata standard.

2.4 Quality Principles

- The custodian should ensure that the data is accurate and current enough for the purpose for which the data was captured. Where possible errors exist, the degree of probability of its correctness should be made available.

- The custodian should ensure that the data or information is free from ambiguities.
- Custodians should ensure that the quality and resolution of their data sets meet the needs of their intended users
- Frequent and timely spatial data set updates from custodians of base data sets should be sent to custodians of derived data sets.
- Custodians of derived datasets should ensure that their data is derived from the latest base datasets.

3.0 Rights

Custodians are entitled to charge for spatial information / data sets in accordance with the Pricing Policy.

4.0 User Responsibility Principles

The access to information alone cannot facilitate or improve decision making, unless the information is accurate and relevant to the users needs. Section 195, sub section (1g) of the constitution states” *Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information*”. The size and volume of attribute information that goes with spatial information makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the custodian alone to ensure a hundred percent accuracy of the data/information. A responsibility will be placed on all users to report any error(s) found in databases to the person(s) from whom they obtained the data/information.

- Users must report errors found in spatial datasets to the custodian(s) from whom they obtained the data/information in accordance with the Spatial Information Bill.
- Users shall comply with the copyright requirements of the data custodian.
- If a user is granted permission to update the information obtained from a custodian, the updates should be passed back to the custodian at no cost.