

Meeting Summary
DataFinder Café Upgrade Workgroup
September 14, 2005
(1:00 to 3:30 P.M)

Attending: Robert Maki (MN DNR), David Brandt (Washington County), Ron Wencil (USGS), Chris Cialek (LMIC), David Bitner (Metropolitan Airports Commission), Brian Huberty (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Steve Lorbach (City of St. Paul), Joella Givens (MnDOT).

Staff Support Team: Alison Slaats and Mark Kotz (Metropolitan Council – Co-Managers of DataFinder)

Observer: Randall Johnson (MetroGIS Staff Coordinator)

INTRODUCTIONS AND AGENDA

After each person present introduced themselves, Kotz and Slaats presented a proposed agenda for the meeting, reviewed the workgroup's scope and purpose, summarized the functional priorities agreed upon at the previous meeting, and summarized direction received from the group in terms of research options.

The slides used to facilitate discussion can be viewed at
http://www.metrogis.org/teams/workgroups/cafe_upgrade/0914slides.pdf.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND OPTIONS DISCUSSION

Slaats summarized the pros and cons of options she and Kotz had explored. (The materials discussed by the workgroup are attached as Attachment A.) All agreed that the proposed design timeframe of 3 years is realistic. Johnson also commented that the group should keep in mind, as the options are reviewed, that an important principle of MetroGIS is that no organization is asked to do something for the group for which they do not have an internal need, noting that the Metropolitan Council has accepted responsibility to host MetroGIS's data distribution function with this understanding. Kotz noted that all options provide for WMS output.

Option 1 – Café Reloaded

The group concurred that this option would cost in the \$50,000-\$100,000 range, depending on the functionality pursued, and would need the assistance of an experienced Java programmer for the ongoing support. It was agreed that these costs were not justified relative to the other options available. Another concern was expressed that there are no other installations of the middleware product that would be developed with this option. Staff was asked to provide more detail for the cost section of this option as well as for the other options to the extent practical.

Options 1a

This option was rejected because it provided no more functionality than options 2a-2c and because it would involve Java programming expertise. It was considered to be too expensive for the benefit received, relative to other options.

Options 2a-2c

Brandt suggested, and the group concurred, that the matrix of options should be expanded to include the GeoCortex product. Brandt agreed to work with staff to modify the matrix. All agreed that the presence of GeoCortex would add desired functionality to Options 2a-2c, most notably the ability to read WMS in Option 2a. It would also provide a streamlined application development framework that would expedite not only the development of the Café, but also would provide the same opportunity for a variety of anticipated additional application development needs.

There was a good deal of discussion about pros and cons of these options. Staff noted that Option 2a was the best fit from their perspective, assuming that the Metropolitan Council would continue to support

MetroGIS's data distribution function. It was generally agreed upon that all of the options might involve a similar amount of customization time. The group concurred that Options 2a and 2c were the best fits and that GeoCortex should be explored as a valuable addition to 2a. The group also agreed that the decision between 2a and 2c should be left to the custodian organization to ensure that existing technology and resources are utilized. The group also recommended that the implementation be based upon recognized standards to the extent practical to minimize code loss when system components are upgraded.

The group concurred that functionality currently supported via Café (remote distribution of WMS) but not included in Options 2a or 2c is somewhat unfortunate to lose, but is not a priority due to lack of use. All were comfortable that in roughly 3 years – the design timeframe for the current proposal – that the community may have recognized a need for these advanced functions and software options may be available that do not require the expensive customization currently needed to support them. As such, it was agreed that the proposed course of action 2a or 2c is the most prudent at this time.

PRESENTATION TO COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The five members of the Workgroup who are also members of the Coordinating Committee agreed to facilitate the discussion among Committee members following a presentation of the options and the workgroup's recommendation by staff.

It was agreed that the presentation to the Committee should focus on:

- 1) Obtaining Committee concurrence on the data distribution functionality priorities.
- 2) Obtaining Committee concurrence with the philosophy of allowing the custodian organization to select between options 2a, 2c or a Geocortex client, based on custodian's internal resources and expertise.
- 3) Obtaining Committee concurrence that the long-term philosophy is to be compatible with an enterprise architecture model that has been endorsed by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information.

ADJOURN AND NEXT MEETING

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

The next meeting date was not set. A decision regarding the need for another Workgroup will be made following the Wednesday, September 21 Coordinating Committee meeting.

Prepared by:
Randall Johnson,
Mark Kotz and
Alison Slaats
(MetroGIS Staff Support Team)

Attachment A
(Agreed to by the DataFinder Workgroup: August 12, 2005)

Data Distribution Functionality Priorities
Workgroup Recommendations for General Functionality beyond FTP

Question	Staff Recommendation	Comments
Browse (view) the geographic data	High	Critical component
Browse (view) the dataset metadata records	High	Critical component
Access data via a map service (specifically WMS)	High	This was not rated highly by the user surveys, but the workgroup recognizes it as the future of the technology.
The ability to distribute my organization's data on Café	High	Even though few organizations are distributing data through DataFinder, and none via map services, we need to continue to encourage others to participate. This item does not specifically assume others will distribute data via a map service that they publish, but just that they will contribute data to be distributed.
Download "non-secure" datasets	High	This includes all free, unlicensed datasets. The key point with this item is that it does NOT require a security piece to the Café.
Browse (view) the attribute data using the identify tool	Medium/High	
Download several datasets in a single bundle	Medium	
Zoom to a predefined geographic area such as a county	Medium	
Select certain fields to download	Medium	
Clip to viewable extent or bounding box	Medium/Low	This is the simplest of the clipping functions.
Clip data to predefined polygon (city, county, etc)	Medium/Low	Complexity of programming and CPU intensive for complex poly on poly overlay ... ArcIMS can fail
Clip data to self-defined polygon (user draws)	Medium/Low	This involves complex programming and seems to be of limited use.
Download "secure" datasets (TLG and/or Parcels)	Medium/Low	This has had minimal usage and adds great complexity and administration to the application.
Download format other than shapefile	Low	High cost for almost no use for secure data, minimal use for other datasets