

Educating Adults for Neogeography, the Geospatial Web and for their applications in Local Governments and Digital Cities

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The last years have seen the expansion of “geobrowsers”, offering various useful applications (real estate, photo tourism, searching for place names etc). Yet, the onset of the Geospatial Web is progressively revolutionizing the way we use, update and manage cartographic information. The use of handheld devices has further enhanced the Geospatial Web, to the extent that a new kind of Geography begun to appear: “Neogeography”.

The core technology enabling all these new developments is the “Semantic Web”, now enriched with geospatial technologies. Sharing picture metadata it uses RDF, a protocol standardized by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and XML, alongside OGC webservices. As the Web 2.0 involves human-powered classification with social bookmarking and tagging, the process of “geotagging” emerged, which is a geocoding for adding geographical identification metadata to non-geographical information resources (Web sites, images, videos). The metadata usually consist of longitude and latitude coordinates, but they may also include altitude and place names.

Although most geobrowsing platforms use XML scripting software (such as Flickr, Zoomr, Picasa), specific languages are also useful (i.e.KML, GML and the Web Ontology Language, OWL). Such Web 2.0 applications include Mappr Flickr, Plazes, Placeopedia (Flickr allows community-driven efforts to add location to content and Placeopedia allows photo-sharing and geotagging of images).

The applications of the Geospatial Web for Local Governments are manifold: from managing geodatabases through the Internet, to allowing access of citizens to geoinformation. Yet, all these applications, which transform an ordinary city to what is now termed “intelligent city”, do not come without problems: These can be semantic ambiguities, uncertainty in data and security concerns, while the main problem of devising ways to extract geoinformation from natural language (toponym disambiguation/ geoambiguity) remains.

Future educators in Geography and Cartography may focus on developing appropriate practices in Neogeography and Geospatial Web applications.