Content Analysis of Municipal Open Data Catalogues Across Canada

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Background and Relevance

Governments are increasingly called upon to provide free public access to their operational datasets. A preliminary content analysis of the data catalogue within the City of Toronto's open data portal was conducted in July and August 2013, with attention to data formats and data types available for download. For example, we found that 91 of Toronto's 133 open datasets had a geospatial component, half of which were available in Shapefile format.

Methods and Data

As of October 2013, a more comprehensive scan of municipal open data catalogues across Canada has started, which follows the methodology developed by Currie (2013). This methodology provides a well-organized framework for the evaluation of municipal open data sites. Our study covers the Canadian cities participating in the GeoThink SSHRC Partnership Grant and consists of a content analysis of their open data catalogues and metadata.

Results

Using Currie's (2013) approach presents an opportunity to compare open datasets surveyed in 2012 with the situation one year later. For example, as of November 2012, Currie reported 105 open datasets for Toronto, of which 70 were identified as geographic. Thus, in less than one year, the number of available datasets has increased by 25% to 30%.

Our goal is to create a master list and present a quantitative analysis of the nature of open data currently provided to the public, as well as an assessment of the growth of open data *supply* over the course of a year. The output of our research will include summaries and charts referring to dataset themes and data formats. Based on the preliminary content analysis, it is expected that a significant portion of datasets will be spatially relevant and available in Shapefile format.

Conclusions

This study will inform additional research within the GeoThink partnership on the policies and procedures around municipal open data catalogues, and on the *demand* side of open data in Canada.

References

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Open data catalogues

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