

Meeting of the steering group of the OAC User Group. 2 May 2007

Introductory notes for agenda items

(3) Affiliation to SUF

Will include report on a meeting with Andrew Garrett of RSS on 18 April to discuss arrangements applying to an affiliated group.

(4) Activities

Dan made rapid progress in setting up the first and second versions of the UG website in advance of the 2 April seminar, but then ran into an issue over the amount of server space available which hopefully will have been resolved by the end of April.

A new entry on the UG has been added to the GKB, and the SG is asked to look at a possible 'rationalization' of other entries on OAC

The repeat seminar was well attended (some 43 present) again by people from a wide range of organisations, and feedback was positive.

The User Group so far has approx. 170 members with 29 Academic, 22 Commercial, 18 Local Authority, 72 Public Sector – other and 30 unknown. JISCMail has not been used yet to mail out to the members, as only 16 members have signed up.

Tom has initiated the collection of case studies - see separate document.

(5) News from ONS and elsewhere

To include news of SOA classification at ONS, use of OAC with ONS survey data, Martin Callingham's work naming the OAC sub groups, and the OAC Google maps 'mash up'.

(6) Focus for remainder of 2007 and beyond

The SG is invited to agree that the primary aim of promoting the use of OAC should continue, but, to avoid any risk of OAC becoming a 'hovercraft' of classification (great concept but limited use), it is suggested that the focus should be on successful and beneficial application in the three main areas we have identified in publicity - profiling populations, structuring other data, targeting resources - with case studies a key element.

To influence plans for official statistics in the interests of OAC, for example the output of the 2011 Census, it would be desirable to be showing the benefits of applications within the next year.

But the SG is also invited to consider whether a wider remit might help to stimulate interest and add to influence, for example by extending interest to open sources in general, methodological development, or area classification more generally, either in 2007 or in the longer term.

(7) Roles for the SG and its members

The roles already allocated to SG members need to be confirmed, the taking up of further roles would be very welcome, particularly responsibility for developing the use of OAC and growing membership in particular user sectors.

(8) Resources and plans

The UG is currently resourced entirely in kind, with the generous help of the RSS and other organizations, and the additional complications of setting up funding have been avoided so far, with clear benefit from running seminars without charge. There will be feedback from discussion with the RSS, but, in any event, the SG is invited to consider whether more formal plans should be set out, especially for information to the wider membership.

(9) Rotation of key responsibilities

A user group needs a core of enthusiasts to be effective, and key people to have the expertise and contacts to support its aims and to involve the wider membership. The SG is invited to discuss the rotation of responsibilities, and any other matters of 'governance'.

(10) Website

Dan will report on any issues in hosting the site at Sheffield and arising from the 'editorial' role, together with future plans and the scope for contribution of further content or other input. SG members are also asked to encourage links to be made from other sites to the OAC site.

Consideration would also be given to extent to which UG activities such as user support can be carried out through the website.

(11) Case studies

SG members are encouraged to suggest additions to the collection of case studies initiated by Tom (see separate attachment) as a vital part of a focus on applications.

(12) Events

The SG is invited to discuss formats for face to face events and the outline of a medium term programme, and also to decide or narrow down the topic(s) for an autumn event (the assumption is that this would be held at the RSS, and a provisional booking will need to be made without delay). Possibilities for promoting OAC and the UG through other upcoming events will also be considered.

The topic(s) for an autumn event would most probably reflect the outcome of discussion under item (6), and, if the focus is on applications, there would ideally be contributions of the case study type, or on firm plans for specific applications, as well as 'how to do it' contributions.

It would also be ideal to start making plans and lining up contributions more or less from May onwards and to do this through a small sub group.