

The National Atlas of Canada -- Growth, Challenge and Evolution

R. Eric Kramers

Senior Geomatics Officer

GeoAccess Division

Natural Resources Canada

Room 650

615 Booth Street

Ottawa, Canada

K1A 0E9

Telephone: (613) 947-6267

Fax: (613) 947-2410

E-mail: kramers@nrcan.gc.ca

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Abstract:

The 6th Edition of The National Atlas of Canada was launched at the 19th ICA conference in Ottawa, Canada. It is a client centred, completely Internet-based atlas that uses the most current on-line mapping software and technologies. This new medium offers users the ability to interact in new ways with more detailed maps and data.

The main objective of the National Atlas is to disseminate quality popularized scientific information about the geography of Canada. Using maps, text, various types of multimedia aids and ancillary documents, users are provided with information about policies and science that affects them. The National Atlas provides linkages to services such as online searches on data holdings, publication catalogues and other specialized web sites. This paper will look at the Atlas' first two years of growth in its new technological domain. The challenges of applying national scale research to this growing and changing environment will be explored.

The National Atlas has recently conducted user-based research on the new 6th edition. The feedback obtained in this exercise is essential to the development of the National Atlas. The goals of the feedback are achieving greater client satisfaction, determining how the National Atlas is used and how to achieve greater use of the National Atlas with our client groups. While any measure of client satisfaction is temporal, this effort will set the stage for an on-going process of assessing the National Atlas in the future. A look at the results of this client research, which includes on-line surveys, server log analysis and focus groups, will provide insight into who Canada's National Atlas constituency is and what they want from it.

The National Atlas of Canada continues its long tradition of collaboration with academia and other Canadian researchers to develop content for the new 6th Edition. In September 2000 a request for proposals was issued through Canada's GeoConnection's initiative to offer Canadian researchers the opportunity to develop new content. The goal of the research is to bring balance

to the content of the Atlas that will answer fundamental questions on geographical subjects that are of interest to Canadians. A look at this process and the content being developed will be presented.