GeoThink Canada

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Sept.2013

FRONT MATTER

Welcome to Geothink

By Geothink

Welcome everyone, to GeoThink - shorthand for the recently awarded SSHRC partnership grant 'How the Geospatial Web 2.0 is Reshaping Government-Citizen Interactions'. This is our first quarterly newsletter and we hope you find some relevant information about the research programs getting started as a part of this grant.

GeoThink Defined

We live in a hyperlocal world, made possible by geospatial technologies like Google Maps and GPS-enabled cellphones. People tweet about potholes; their mobile apps deliver directions to the nearest coffee shop, whose reviews were contributed by individuals. Governments add to the geographic data stream by opening up their data, like real time transportation information. These new forms of map making, called the Geospatial Web 2.0, are important for Canada, known as a world leader in map making and geographic technologies but whose leadership has since waned.

The emergence of these tools and services provides new capabilities for both non-experts and governments to contribute crowd-sourced geographic information to a host of social, economic and environmental challenges. The widespread accessibility of these capabilities is significant because it blurs distinctions between user and producer of geographic information and allows citizens to volunteer geographic information with their locations and experiences.

Ours is a 5-year partnership research grant funded by SSHRC and is one of only 20 grants awarded this year. Geothink is composed of 26 researchers and 30 partners, called "Geothink". Geothink examines the implications of increasing two-way exchanges of locational information between citizens and governments and the way in which technology shapes, and is shaped by, this exchange. We couple government initiatives for open government and open access to data with citizens' volunteered geographic contributions, and to spur innovation in operations and government-to-citizen (G2C) interactions.

IN THIS ISSUE

Meet the 'R2T2' Team
Over the summer, a hard-working duo collected profiles of our partners and laid the framework for the rapid response think tank (R2T2).

Partner Spotlight
Meet our grant partner Esri Canada. Read what Esri hopes to get from partnering with GeoThink and what their plans are to assist in achieving these goals.

Canada and Open Data
Canada Released a New Open Data License. Read all about it in the post contributed by Prof. Teresa Scassa

What Happened at the AGM

By Geothink

Our 1st Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held in Montreal at McGill University in the early weeks of the grant. Nine co-applicants, one collaborator and one partner attended the meeting. We also had four co-applicants and one collaborator join us virtually via Skype.

Minutes from the AGM

The objective of the AGM was to kick off the grant and begin charting a plan forward.

During the meeting, we reviewed the overall goals; we discussed the advantages of partners' contributions; and we talked about the logistics of reporting and budgeting.

The attendees (physical as well as virtual) were divided into six groups according to the themes to 'crowd source' an initial outline of activities, methods, deliverables, progress indicators and specific points of partner engagement for Year 1, while keeping in mind the ultimate deliverables in Year 5. The development of the themes in GeoThink was the primary focus and is discussed in more detail later in the newsletter.

We welcome comments and even modification of the slides from the AGM. Crowdsourcing, after all, is a prime component of our grant. Please email adm.geothink@gmail.com. We also will place this material on www.geothink.ca.

The Next AGM

We are in the midst of planning the next AGM in Ottawa 2014. We hope to hold the conference in conjunction with MISA-Ontario. This will provide an opportunity for all of us to gather and meet many of you.

If you have further questions about the AGM past or future, please let us know.

Annual General Meeting 2014

GeoThink 2014 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place **June 7-8** in the City of **Ottawa**. This will coincide with MISA Ontario Annual Conference and Tradeshow which will be held also in the City of Ottawa from June 8 -11. Stay tuned for more information.

Please, Please Contribute!

By GeoThink

Many Things to Do, Many Hands to Help

This will be one of several calls for your contributions to the operations of this research grant. The grant is built on the premise that, only by engaging partners, can we understand the full scope of citizen-government collaborations via these new technologies and data sources. So we need you!

We have several built-in programs to do exactly that. These include webinars and workshops, student contacts, and R2T2. You also can participate in the research projects.

Webinars and Workshops

The goal of workshops and webinars are to provide direct interaction with experts from academia, private industry and government via specific learning events.

We hope to have our first webinar this Fall and a regional workshop soon after. We will make sure that all of you are updated on the times and location of these events. But without YOU lending a helping hand on these events we will less able to design these events according to our intended goals.

Students of GeoThink

Also a part of the GeoThink grant is our focus on training tomorrow's leading intellectuals on GeoWeb and government interactions. To accommodate this goal we are starting a student-run group affectionately called SOG (Students of GeoThink). We will be sending an email to the students on this grant very soon. If you are a faculty member and have students working with you please forward their emails to us as soon as possible. If you would like to mentor a student, let us know.

SOG will, among other things, lead the charge on our social-media outreach through regular tweets, posts, and blogs. SOG'ers will also be taking an active role in the various research themes of GeoThink and sharing this information through our workshops and webinars.

Contact Jing,

Our Research Coordinator, if you would like to become more involved.
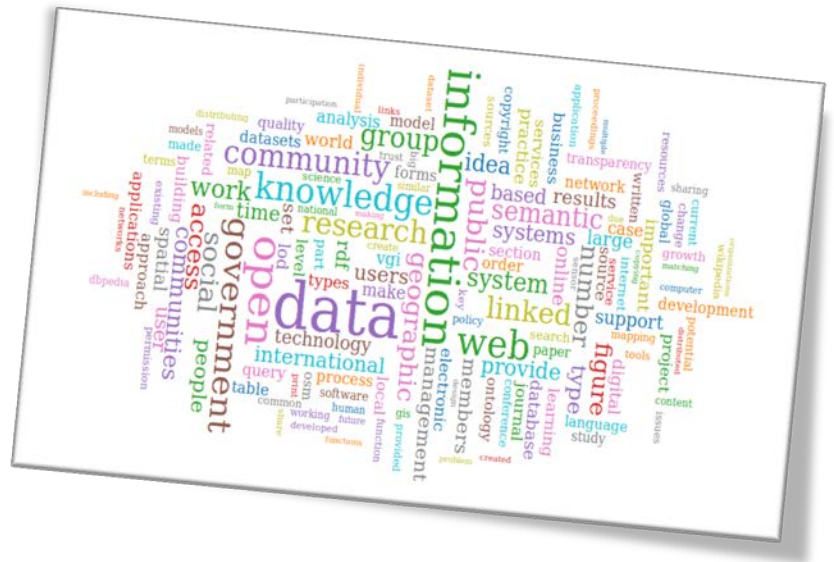GeoThink Contact: adm.geothink@gmail.com

Rapid Response Think Tank by R2T2

Our grant includes plans for a Rapid Response Think Tank (R2T2), which will assist in quickly connecting faculty and students with private, public, and civil society partners.

Part of this connection is a response to real world needs in a constantly developing field of our partners.

With a network of domain experts and front-line leaders, for example from cities, we hope R2T2 can aid in the development of more informed, effective, and participatory government-citizen relationships.

R2T2 will act as a bridge between partner and academic communities, that is a clearinghouse for ideas and experience drawn from our co-applicants and collaborators, transferred directly to partners, and a significant opportunity for communication with non-academic audiences.

R2T2 will eventually become self-sustaining as non-partner requests are incorporated near the end of the partnership. Our hope is that it will continue after the grant is done!

If you have any further question or input on the R2T2 project please send us an email at geothink.ca@gmail.com

FUTURE OF R2T2

Surveys were conducted over the summer to gather information on what kinds of topics, resources, and operations would be a part of the R2T2. The report will be issued in the Fall.

A committee is being formed and infrastructure designed to support the program.

More on the R2T2 Team
by R2T2

(Left) Courtney Claessens (Right) Alex Taciuk

Meet our two-team research duo. They just completed their undergraduate degrees and are looking for jobs.

Meet Alex

Hi, I'm Alex Taciuk, a recent graduate of the Urban Systems program at McGill. Over the summer I worked as a researcher on the GeoThink team under the supervision of Professor Renée Sieber. I've introduced myself to many of you through my incessant emails about the partner surveys, which were used to both envision R2T2 and advise a literature review on partnership best practices. Currently, I'm back home in Vancouver looking for employment in the urban planning field, and dreaming about my next traveling and skiing adventures.

Meet Courtney

I am also a recent graduate of the Geography program at McGill University. Over the summer I worked as a researcher on the GeoThink team under the advisement of Renée Sieber. I enjoyed working with the partners over the summer. My goal is to find a position that aligns with my career goals of working in a municipality on open data and open government initiatives that improve citizen-policy operations.

Partner Spotlight: Esri Canada

by Brent Hall and Matt Tenney

Every newsletter, we plan to introduce you to one of our partners. For our inaugural newsletter, we talked to Dr. Brent Hall, from Esri Canada. Dr. Hall is the Director of the Education and Research Group at Esri Canada, where his primary goals are to establish relationships between his team and education programs across Canada concerning geospatial applications.

Dr. Hall is no stranger to what it takes to conduct large research programs in academia as he has a 30+ year career as

a university professor both internationally and here in Canada.

Retiring from the University of Waterloo several years ago, and then the University of Otago in New Zealand – Brent has taken on the task of involving Esri Canada with research and education programs across the country.

Esri Canada has shown significant support for the GeoThink grant in a variety of ways. In addition to wanting to take a hands-on role in the research within the themes, Esri has generously contributed several internship positions for the students of

GeoThink. These internships will provide students with hands-on opportunities to gain experience with a world-leader in GIS software design.

We look forward to building our relationship with Esri Canada and benefiting from their involvement in future workshops and webinar series.

In the meantime, check out their Community Maps Exchange Project.

Themes of GeoThink

By Renée Sieber and Matthew Tenney

Most of the activity at the AGM was laying the groundwork for the themes of GeoThink and their initial activities.

Theme 1 Anywhere, Anyone, Anytime

We believe that Web 2.0 and its associated technologies will dramatically shift the way cities talk to their constituents and others. People can communicate with cities from anywhere, outside of a jurisdiction, and at any time, for example, which means outside formal venues like city council meetings. Anonymity implies that you do not know the identity of the contributor. It challenges our traditional definitions of community, citizen, and participation. We will evaluate the processes of technology development and

that impact on the city and the citizen.

Theme 2 Spatial Authenticity, Accuracy, and Standards

The moment you bring up volunteered geographic information (VGI) (e.g., with Open 311), you worry about the quality of data. This theme considers questions of data structures, standards, and documentation practices used by public agencies. The research produced by this theme also will affect consensus on terminology, data standards, and dissemination regarding opening up government data and accepting VGI.

Theme 3 Law and Policy Dimensions

Data related to governance is not simply a technical matter. Issues that are policy and legal in nature will be a primary focus as we try to understand the way Geoweb 1) fits in existing law and policy, and 2) shapes new policies and law. Specific legal domains of interest are privacy, intellectual property, access to information, access to justice, and the interplay between norms, codes and technology with regards to governance.
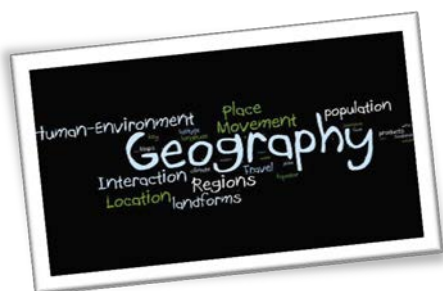
Theme 4 Open Everything

We will track municipal open data engagement over time, theorize about the impacts of open data on governance, and from a practical perspective understand and develop best practices. We also have the opportunity to document best practices and track the evolution of open data practices over time.

Theme 5 Social Justice

We will explore aspects of Geoweb - Society relationships as they pertain to social justice. We will identify the success and failures of Geoweb for community development. Using a case study approach we will use participatory research to identify emerging concepts of place, the intersection of community, engagement and social justice, and the accessibility to Geoweb.

Theme 6 Geoweb Political Economy

This theme will focus on understanding the political economy of the Geoweb as it concerns ownership structures, institutions, and policies. Power relationships between actors and processes of inclusion and exclusion among social media owners and users also will be our focus.

Canada Released a New Open Data License

by Teresa Scassa

With little fanfare, the Canadian government has released its much awaited, newly revised Open Government Licence. The previous version that had been available on its Open Data site was a beta version on which public comments were invited. The government has also published its Open Government Licence Consultation Report, which summarizes and discusses the comments received during the consultation process.

The revised version of the licence is an improvement over its predecessor. Gone is the claim to database rights, which do not exist in Canada. (These rights do exist in the UK, the Open Government Licence of which was a template for the Canadian licence). The new licence also discards the UK term "personal data" and replaces it with "personal information", and it gives this term the meaning ascribed under the federal Privacy Act. The language used in the licence has been further simplified, making it even more accessible.

It should be noted that Alberta's new open government licence – released as part of the launch of its open government portal earlier this year – is very similar to V2.0 of the federal government licence. There are some minor formatting differences, and a few changes in wording, most of which can be explained by the different jurisdiction (for example, the definition of "personal information" refers to Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act). The similarities between the two licences are no coincidence. Although the Alberta licence was made public prior to the release of the federal government's V2.0, work has been going on behind the scenes to move towards some form of federal/provincial consensus on the wording of open government licences with a view to ensuring that there is legal interoperability between data sets released by different governments in Canada.

The efforts to reduce barriers to interoperability (whether legal or technical) are important to the ability of Canadians to work with and to integrate different data sets in new and innovative ways. Thus not only is the COGL V2.0 to be welcomed, so are the signs that cooperation and coordination may lead to a greater legal interoperability of open government licences across Canada.

Read more posts by Teresa @ http://www.teresascassa.ca/

Canada is falling behind the rest of the world on open data and open government

"It's time for the Harper government to step up their game, or explain why they're not"

Cool "We Are Data" Game

Ubisoft opened the website "We Are Data", aggregating all "open data" in big European towns, to promote their social network game, Watch_Dogs

New Hampshire has passed HB418

New Hampshire has passed HB418. State agencies are now required by law to consider open source software when acquiring software, and to promote the use of open data formats.

Meet Jing: Research Coordinator

Hi, my name is Jing Hoon Teo.

Where am I coming from?

Renée and I met 6 years ago when I was working at the Geography Department as an Administrative Coordinator taking care of financial matters for all professors in the department. I left McGill 4 years ago upon completion of my contract and I am now back working directly for Renée as a Research Coordinator.

I have a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration but I am not a Geographer! GeoThink is new to me and I am excited to be part of this new technology era.

I coordinate all the logistics of the grant. I also will be coordinating AGM 2014, which will be held in Ottawa, and I will be assisting Matthew on workshops and webinars.

I am your contact person on logistical and accounting matters. Don't ask me for money for I have no access to funds...... lol.....

I love working with people and I look forward to working with all of you.

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Student Spotlight: PhD Student Matthew Tenney

Contact Matt @
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Hello! I am a new PhD. student in Geography at McGill University, looking forward to working with everyone on the GeoThink Grant. My academic supervisor is Prof. Renée Sieber and I plan on exploring aspects of open-data/government with regards to potential of decision systems based around participation by communities of interest and need.

Where am I Coming From?

Prior to coming to McGill I finished my M.A. in Geography with the Center of Advanced Spatial Technologies (CAST) at the University of Arkansas. At CAST I was able to work with a group of international scholars from a variety of fields. My thesis was based around Spatial Cognition and Wayfinding behavior, but I also conducted a lot of research with Remote Sensing, 3D-Visualization, and Spatial Analysis.

Before coming back to graduate school I worked in the private industry as a GIS Analyst doing fun things with stereoscopic photogrammetry, urban analysis, and cartographic production. I have an undergrad degree in Sociology and Communication Studies with a minor in Philosophy.

What Am I Excited About?

My choice for coming to McGill was in large part due to the research opportunities afforded by GeoThink. Being connected to leading intellectuals, professionals, and officials across Canada can provide a direct means to produce impacting research and lead to significant changes in the way we live, think, and go about learning in the world. We have the opportunity to directly engage with issues and technologies that are pervasive in today's world. That is exciting to me.

Student Spotlight: Master's Student Peck

Where am I coming from?

Hi, my name is Peck. I am an international student from Thailand, having recently completed my undergraduate degree in Geography here at McGill University.

I have always been interested in tech and related industry, as well as geography. I have been involved in GeoThink since 2012, and have witnessed the planning stages of this project.

What am I excited about?

Data. I would like to see where increased access to good and useful data will lead us, especially in creating new products and services that generate wealth in the economy.

Hopefully one day, I will be able to bring some of the knowledge I have gained here back to Thailand, where the market in telecommunications is still growing and far from saturation.

I am looking forward to continuing my involvement in the project and contributing to our eventual long-term goals.

Student Research: Stephanie Piper

Stephanie Piper is a Masters of Arts student in Geography and Environmental Management at the University of Waterloo. Her supervisor is Peter Johnson. Here's a description of her proposed research. We welcome ideas and input into her research goals and process.

Governments and non-governmental organizations across Canada are taking significant measures to improve transparency and efficiency in their everyday activities and services. A key component of this trend is the emergence of new data distribution protocols, often called "open data" initiatives. The emergence of open data initiatives call for data, which was previously limited to internal organizational use, to be opened up to the public with no restrictions/copyrights or costs. Though only generally defined, open data at minimum must be downloadable by users free of charge, contain contents that can be viewed, edited and combined with other data (mashable), and be provided under a non-restrictive license.

In Canada, delivering open data has become a major focus at every level of government. The motivations for delivering open data from government to citizens has generally fallen into several broad categories, including the search for efficiencies in government operations, supporting a desire for increased transparency or achieving other democratic goals, and in creating economic value through the liberalization of government data. A significant research gap exists in understanding the value and impact of these open data initiatives. As a new phenomenon, there has been little coordinated effort to reflect on and evaluate the value derived by the end user of open data. Current perspectives on the value of open data are often anecdotal, or reflect only the potential commercialization of software applications developed that use open data.

The objectives of this research are to 1) measure the value of open data as reported by diverse user communities (government, non-profit, community organizations, private developers); and 2) develop a set of quantitative metrics to guide the evaluation of open data strategies at all levels of government. Value is used as general term that encompasses both economic and non-economic value. Through these research objectives, the proposed research will make a significant contribution to the emerging discourse on the use and value of open data, and support policy.

Partner Contact List: Everyone Meet

Name of Organization	Type of Organization	City	Province/State	Last/First Name	Email
Centre for Law, Technology and Society (University of Ottawa)	Academic Institution	Ottawa	Ontario	Saginur/Madelaine	Madelaine.saginur@uottawa.ca
Centre for Public Involvement (University of Alberta)	Academic Institution	Edmonton	Alberta	Cavanagh/Fiona	fiona.cavanagh@ualberta.ca
City of Edmonton	Municipal Government	Edmonton	Alberta	Kershaw/Chris	chris.kershaw@edmonton.ca
City of Kitchener	Municipal Government	Kitchener	Ontario	Amaral/Nicole	Nicole.Amaral@kitchener.ca
City of Ottawa	Municipal Government	Ottawa	Ontario	Giggey/Robert	Robert.Giggey@ottawa.ca
City of Regina	Municipal Government	Regina	Saskatchewan	Leclerc/Philippe	PLECLERC@regina.ca
City of Toronto (Information & Technology Metro Hall)	Municipal Government	Toronto	Ontario	Garner/Trish	tgarner@toronto.ca
City of Vancouver	Municipal Government	Vancouver	British Columbia	Low/Linda	linda.low@vancouver.ca
City of Victoria	Municipal Government	Victoria	British Columbia	Josephson/Kathleen (Katie)	kjosephson@victoria.ca
City of Waterloo	Municipal Government	Waterloo	Ontario	Bezruki/Garry	garry.bezruki@waterloo.ca
Esri Canada	Private	Toronto	Ontario	Hall/Brent	bhall@esri.ca
IBM Canada Limited	Private	Kingston	Ontario	Aldridge/Donald	daldridg@ca.ibm.com
Knowledge Media Design Institute (University of Toronto)	Academic Institution	Toronto	Ontario	Clement/Andrew	andrew.clement@utoronto.ca
Microsoft Corporation	Public	Redmond	Washington	Xu/Yan	yanxu@microsoft.com
Montreal Ouvert	Association	Montreal	Quebec	Lenczner/Michael	michael@ajah.ca

Neptis Foundation (The)	Charitable	Toronto	Ontario	Burchfield/Marcy	mburchfield@neptis.org
Nova Scotia Community Counts (NSCC), Dept. of Finance	Provincial/Territorial Government	Halifax	Nova Scotia	Shookner/Malcolm	shooknmr@gov.ns.ca
Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (OPC)	Federal Government	Ottawa	Ontario	Millar-Chapman/Melanie	Melanie.Millar-Chapman@priv.gc.ca
Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)	Municipal government	Kelowna	British Columbia	Sears/Anna	anna.warwick.sears@obwb.ca
Open North Inc.	Research	Montreal	Quebec	Guidoin/Stephane	stephane@opennorth.ca
OpenStreetMap - US Chapter	Foreign	Salt Lake City	Utah	Van Excel/Martijn	m@rtijn.org
Ryerson Journalism Research Centre (RJRC)	Academic Institution	Toronto	Ontario	Lindgren/April	april.lindgren@ryerson.ca
Ryerson University	Academic Institution	Toronto	Ontario	Laberge/Paule	paule.laberge@ryerson.ca
Sani International Technology Advisors Inc.	Private	Markham	Ontario	Sani/Aaron	aaron.sani@gmail.com
United States Geological Survey	Foreign	St. Petersburg	Florida	Poore/Barbara	bspoore@usgs.gov
University of British Columbia	Academic Institution	Kelowna	British Columbia	El Jabi/Lainna	lainna.ElJabi@ubc.ca
Universite Laval	Academic Institution	Quebec	Quebec	Mackay/John	john.mackay@sbf.ilaval.ca
University of Ottawa	Academic Institution	Ottawa	Ontario	Lefebvre/Daniel	dxlga@uottawa.ca
University of Waterloo	Academic Institution	Waterloo	Ontario	Barber/Thomas	twbarber@uwaterloo.ca

Co-Applicant Contact List: Everyone Meet Everyone

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Dr. Jonathan Corbett	University of British Columbia	jon.corbett@ubc.ca
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Dr. Peter Johnson	University of Waterloo	pa2johns@uwaterloo.ca
Dr. Robert Feick	University of Waterloo	robert.feick@uwaterloo.ca
Dr. Scott Bell	University of Saskatchewan	scott.bell@usask.ca
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Upcoming Events and a Call for Your Participation!

We are in the process of creating a series of webinar and workshops that we hope to hold bi-monthly. In addition to these regular events we will be revamping the website www.geothink.ca

For us to have the broadest impact with the Geothink Project WE NEED YOUR INPUT! This means providing monthly contributions to our social media outlets, writing blog posts, research updates, and being involved in future events. You did sign up for this after all!

If you want account access to the website, social media profiles, our various Google Docs, or have ideas for events PLEASE EMAIL matthew.tenney@mail.mcgill.ca

TENTATIVE EVENTS CALENDAR:

October 2013: We will hold our first installment in the webinar series "Evaluating Open Data" lead by two M.A. students: Peck (Suthee Sangiambut) at McGill University and Stephanie Piper at the University of Waterloo. Indeed, our goal is to have prominent roles for all our students in the grant. Everyone is invited to virtually attend via Google Hangouts. As soon as an exact date is set we will send out mass notifications and reminders to mark and share.

November 2013: We are planning a pilot workshop as soon as November 2013. We are still on the search for a partner that is interested in hosting the event and we have a variety of dynamic topics that can used as the theme. One such suggestion we have is "Civic Hacking: Best Practices for Hackathons for Cities" where those that can attend will meet face to face and learn about how these events can help overcome issues our partners are facing and how to set reasonable expectations from hackathons. If you are interested in hosting this or perhaps another topical workshop, please send us an email.

We hope to alternate webinars and workshops every month and the only way to do this is to have your involvement! We have started compiling a list of "ready-to-go" agendas and topics according to the expressed interests of all of us. Please send us and email to get involved and contribute to these events.

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER @geothinkca, tweet with #geothink

AND

GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR INTERESTS AND HOPES FOR THIS GRANT!