

GEMINI Working Group: Future governance

ed Peter Parslow, Mar 2020

Summary

This paper discusses the future governance of the GEMINI Working Group. It has been produced by the Group following discussion at meetings on 24th February and 16th March 2020. These followed on from a discussion at IST/36 on 6th January where Richard Duffield from AGI Council said that AGI was considering closing its Standards Committee, but was keen to retain responsibility for the GEMINI WG.

AGI Standards Committee is effectively synonymous with BSI's IST/36. However, UK GEMINI is an AGI asset. This has led to some confusion and communication difficulties, which this paper hopes to address.

Recommended future structure

The GEMINI WG looked at three different options:

- 1: the Status Quo - the AGI Standards Committee and BSI IST/36 operating as one;
- 2: GEMINI Working Group governed by IST/36
- 3: GEMINI Working Group governed by AGI Council

This paper describes how the third option, the AGI's preference, could be made to work. None of the members of the group has any objection to this in principle. This would enable the AGI to close its Standards Committee.

It is important that AGI Council reaffirm its commitment for UK GEMINI and become explicitly responsible for its maintenance. They also need to use their influence as a professional body, with the cluster of organisations having varied responsibility for creating, sharing and using geographic metadata.

Advantages of this change would be that the ownership of GEMINI by AGI would become clearer and communication between the GEMINI Working Group and AGI Council would be enhanced.

The GEMINI Working Group would make a regular report to IST/36, e.g. for their quarterly meetings. IST/36 would have a regular agenda item to receive that report, and would have the opportunity to question the GEMINI Working Group. At present, this would be facilitated by the two groups having the same chair, but it cannot be assumed that the chair of IST/36 is always interested (knowledgeable) in metadata.

Considerations for AGI Council

Under this plan, AGI Council should:

- Accept the Accompanying Terms of Reference for the GEMINI Working Group
- Appoint a chair for the GEMINI Working Group, and confirm or amend the current membership;
- Appoint a named contact person on AGI Council as liaison to the GEMINI Working Group;
 - Note: it is essential that that person attends GEMINI Working Group meetings
 - There may be advantage to it being the same person that AGI nominate to IST/36
- Ensure the GEMINI Working Group are engaged in discussions and work on the future of the AGI website (which hosts the GEMINI guidance and documentation set);
- AGI Council to regularly engage with the GEMINI Working Group (chair, nominated Council member) to be aware of activity and to improve working together;
- AGI to take a more active role in promoting the use of GEMINI, for example to the Geospatial Commission.

The GEMINI Working Group would like to highlight to AGI Council that there is a lot of relevant geographic information standardisation carried out by OGC (and others). Although the AGI Standards Committee has not really acted as a channel between AGI and this activity, the AGI Council may wish to engage with OGC in the UK.

Actions for the GEMINI Working Group

- review and update the Standards resources on the (new?) AGI website.
- Create an annual plan of work, as has always been in our Terms of Reference
- Report on that work to both AGI Council and IST/36

Considerations for IST/36

The GEMINI Working Group points out that IST/36 has been relying on them to maintain a working relationship with UK INSPIRE (AIB, Defra) and data.gov.uk (run by Government Digital Service within the Cabinet Office). Both relationships may be better managed at the IST/36 level, as they should be about the wider subject of geo standards – not just metadata.

- IST/36 to continue to have a standing agenda item for GEMINI, to receive and discuss the report.
- IST/36 to act as the channel of communication with ISO.

Background – situation

AGI Standards Committee

The Standards Committee was one of the first areas of activity in AGI after its formation in 1987. Its first deliverable was National Transfer Format (NTF). In 1991 it became the official British Standards committee for GI (named BSI IST/36), but continued with dual branding as the AGI Standards Committee, so that it was in the unusual position in BSI as having an external secretariat (AGI).

While the main activities are related to formal British, European and International Standards, it has also been involved in national initiatives such as the National GeoSpatial Data Framework (NGDF) and the Location Strategy.

The Standards Committee has been a success, leading to the creation of a European (CEN) and then international (ISO) committee for geographic information standards. Effectively, a single committee has operated as both the BSI and AGI committees, but increasingly the idea that it is the AGI Standards Committee has become quite nominal.

Recognising this, we accept that it now makes sense for AGI to formally close their Standards Committee.

UK GEMINI

UK GEMINI is owned by AGI. First published in 2004, UK GEMINI, Specification for discovery metadata for geospatial data resources, was for use in the UK geospatial metadata service gigateway. It conforms to the ISO metadata standard (ISO 19115). UK GEMINI is available to download, free of charge, from the AGI website, together with extensive implementation guidelines.

AGI Council have expressed their desire to continue this, as it is beneficial to the UK geo community as well as to AGI that GEMINI remains free to use and is maintained in a proactive and open manner. The GEMINI Working Group is in agreement that AGI should continue to own GEMINI.

UK GEMINI is maintained by the GEMINI Working Group, which is formally a working group of the AGI Standards Committee. This Group includes members from organisations such as OS, MEDIN, CEH, EDINA, Scottish SDI and BGS. It is published on the AGI website, under a Creative Commons – By Attribution licence.

GEMINI WG current practice

The WG reports to the quarterly IST/36 meetings. It receives technical direction, particularly relating to issues relating to the ISO standards on which it is based. In return it provides expert input to UK responses involvement in relevant work in ISO/TC 211, particularly relating to updates to metadata standards.

The WG holds on-line meetings several times a year. Recent work has mainly consisted of minor fixes to the technical documentation. In 2019, [Schematron files were published on GitHub](#), after discussion with AGI Council in May/June, leading to AGI establishing a GitHub presence. Advice has been provided to several organisations including MOD geo standards, Astun Technology (working for Scottish Government), Cabinet Office Government Digital Service (data.gov.uk), MEDIN and Natural Resources, Wales.

GEMINI WG 2020 work

- There are about ten current issues which the working group is in the process of resolving, which will lead to one or more editorial releases in the next few months.
- The Geospatial Commission funded “Data Discoverability project” is making recommendations, some of which would be best implemented as clarifications to GEMINI 2.3 guidance.

- It seems inevitable that the ongoing development of GEMINI 2.3 software will throw up further issues, so it will be important to keep the working group available to agree resolution, at least for anything beyond simple editorial fixes / improvements.
- It is possible that Government Digital Service resources will become available (with Geospatial Commission funding) to improve the presentation on data.gov.uk of GEMINI 2.3 records. It is likely that this will need further input.
- It is possible that the relationship between the UK and the European Commission will settle. This could result in changes to the governance of “UK INSPIRE”, and therefore of the close relationship between GEMINI and INSPIRE Metadata Technical Guidance. It may result in changes to the harvesting of GEMINI records.

All of this means that the highly technically specialised work of the GEMINI WG will need to continue and be supported.

Issues to resolve

- The GEMINI Working Group has not been providing a work plan to either IST/36 or AGI.
- Many on the GEMINI Working Group were largely unaware of the activities of AGI.
- Until recently, AGI Council was largely unaware of the activities of the GEMINI Working Group.
- Many on the GEMINI Working Group were unaware of the link to AGI, except as the organisation that provides web space for GEMINI.

Previously there was a member of IST/36 on AGI Council, providing regular reports both ways. Since 2014, IST/36 have recognised a risk, currently stated as “Isolation from AGI leadership, due to lack of communication, interest and support from Council”. A number of methods have been tried to improve communication, but so far they have all depended on individual contacts.

We realise this is a lost opportunity on both sides:

- GEMINI Working Group would like to make more use of AGI’s network of members and contacts to ensure that its work meets the requirements of the UK geo community.
- AGI would like GEMINI to be better known and used, particularly given the aspirations set by the Geospatial Commission

Annex: Proposed revised GEMINI Working Group Terms of Reference

Note: the current terms of reference were drawn up to facilitate work on GEMINI 2.3; this proposal includes some changes that are just due to time.

GEMINI Working Group

Terms of Reference

Status

This is a working group of the AGI Council established for the purpose of overseeing the revision and maintenance of the GEMINI metadata standard. Revisions may result from changes to the Technical Guidelines of the INSPIRE Metadata Implementing Rules¹ or from requests for change or correction of errors. The Working Group reports up to the AGI Council and is responsible for (i) the execution of the work associated with the revision and maintenance and (ii) for the expenditure of any funding made available for the work by AGI.

The working group has authority to agree changes to GEMINI by consensus. In the absence of consensus, it shall refer that particular matter to the AGI Council.

Mission

To ensure that revisions of the GEMINI metadata standard are carried through (i) according to plan, (ii) to a budget agreed with AGI and (iii) such that the revisions and their publication are fit for purpose for the users of the standard and its implementation as the UK's profile for geographic metadata.

To ensure that GEMINI remains a type 1 profile (strict subset) of ISO 19115:2003 and of the INSPIRE Metadata Technical Guidelines, in that every valid GEMINI metadata record shall be:

- a valid ISO 19115:2003 metadata entity set, containing ISO 19119:2005 elements where appropriate.
- a valid ISO 19139:2007 document
- a valid metadata record conforming to the requirements of the INSPIRE Metadata Technical Guidelines

Any change in this statement shall be agreed by AGI Council after consultation with relevant UK organisations.

Scope

1. The continuing maintenance of GEMINI.
2. Revision of the GEMINI Guidelines to be consistent with the revision of the standard.
3. Revision and testing of Schematron files used to enforce some of the implementation constraints.
4. Publication in a user-friendly and readily accessible form of the consolidated documentation.
5. Dissemination of information about progress on the activities enumerated above.

¹ Currently Version 2.0.1 dated 2017-03-02

Role

1. To plan, monitor and control those activities within scope.
2. To manage exceptions to the plan and any requests for change.
3. To ensure that users are fully consulted about the proposed changes and that feedback and requests for change are fully taken into account.
4. To ensure that deliverables are fit for purpose through firstly, internal reviews and secondly, external reviews.
5. When needed, to agree financial procedures with AGI and to adopt these.
6. To ensure that all technical issues are resolved either by members of the Working Group or to the satisfaction of the Working Group.
7. To resolve any issues of ownership, copyright and IPR such that all final deliverables will be freely accessible and usable by all subject to any required attribution.
8. To maintain the GEMINI standard and guidelines, and Schematron rules such that (i) conformance to INSPIRE implementing rules and guidelines continues to be met and (ii) change requests are acted upon.
9. To report up to the AGI Council on progress and any issues which are outside these terms of reference.
10. to report regularly to IST/36 on progress
11. To use IST/36 as the appropriate channel for interaction with the ISO TC211 metadata standards

Constitution

The Chair of the Working Group shall be appointed by AGI Council. Other committee members may be nominated or co-opted at any time, and need not be members of AGI. The current membership is:

- Peter Parslow, Chair, Ordnance Survey, and UK INSPIRE Architecture & Interoperability Board (AIB)
- Rob Walker, IST/36, and original GEMINI editor
- James Reid, EDINA, Defra-sponsored GEMINI software, and AIB
- James Passmore, BGS, and Schematron expertise
- Sean Gaffney, MEDIN
- Phil Trembath, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
- Tim Duffy, BGS, and AIB
- Claire Dawson and Matt Jinman, ONS
- John Tate, HS2

The original membership was:

- Peter Parslow, chair
- Rob Walker
- Peter Vodden, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
- James Reid, AGI Standards Committee and EDINA
- Sean Gaffney, Medin
- Les Rackham, AGI Standards Committee and ConsultingWhere Ltd
- Claire Dawson or Tee Parry, Office of National Statistics

Membership shall be reviewed periodically by the AGI Council which shall agree any changes to membership.

Meetings

The Working Group will normally conduct business through web conferences and will hold meetings as required by the Chairman or as agreed by the working group.