

2. Geospatial Data Quality



Quality is a characteristic of comparable things that allows us to decide that one thing is better than another. In the context of geographic data, the ultimate standard of quality is the degree to which a data set is fit for use in a particular application. That standard is called **validity**. The standard varies from one application to another. In general, however, the key criteria are how much error is present in a data set, and how much error is acceptable.

Some degree of error is always present in all three components of geographic data: features, attributes, and time. Perfect data would fully describe the location, extent, and characteristics of phenomena exactly as they occur at every moment. Like the proverbial 1:1 scale map, however, perfect data would be too large, and too detailed to be of any practical use. Not to mention impossibly expensive to create in the first place!

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The Nature of Geographic Information

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