

# Results Summary of Survey on Geospatial Metadata Practices among Mountain West Digital Library Partners

## Summary

To assess the practicality of implementing the changes recommended by Dorotea Szkolar's 2012 report on geospatial metadata interoperability, Ms. Szkolar and Sandra McIntyre from the Mountain West Digital Library prepared a survey of MWDL partners on their current practices and future plans for geospatial metadata. In February 2013, twenty-five organizations responded to the SurveyMonkey survey, including all Utah Academic Library Consortium (UALC) members and nine partners outside the UALC proper.

Overall, the majority of partners surveyed acknowledged their geospatial metadata practices could use improvement. The main obstacles partners faced in achieving records with comprehensive geospatial metadata included lack of implementing set standards and expectations, and lack of sufficient expertise and/or experienced staff. Additionally, 40% of those surveyed did not utilize a set standard, while 44% utilized the Library of Congress controlled vocabularies. Other major standards used specifically related to geospatial metadata included the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Name and the USGS Geographic Names Information System. Partners selected current standards mainly because they are widely used and accepted either by digital libraries, by an academic discipline, or by a technical field. Conclusively, 72% of the partners surveyed have no known plan in place to improve geospatial metadata.

Regarding the future and the proposed formation of a Geospatial Discovery Task Force, the survey revealed some promising responses. Those partners that did have plans or are in the process of developing plans indicated they are willing to share the plans with the Task Force. Even more encouragingly, 60% of those surveyed said they had the resources to implement any improvements that would be suggested by the Task Force, and half of those respondents had the capabilities to make such changes within six months. For partners who were unable to implement potential future improvements, all of those respondents indicated that the main obstacle was lack of staff. Other obstacles that ranked highly included lack of time, lack of expertise and lack of funds to comprehensively make recommended changes. Finally, partners were asked their assessment of the feasibility of the recommendations outlined in Ms. Szkolar's report. The majority had not read the 74-page report or had not analyzed it thoroughly enough to comment. Of the partners that had, most would support some but not all the recommendations. Additional survey and discussion will be required to ascertain what specific changes partners would support.

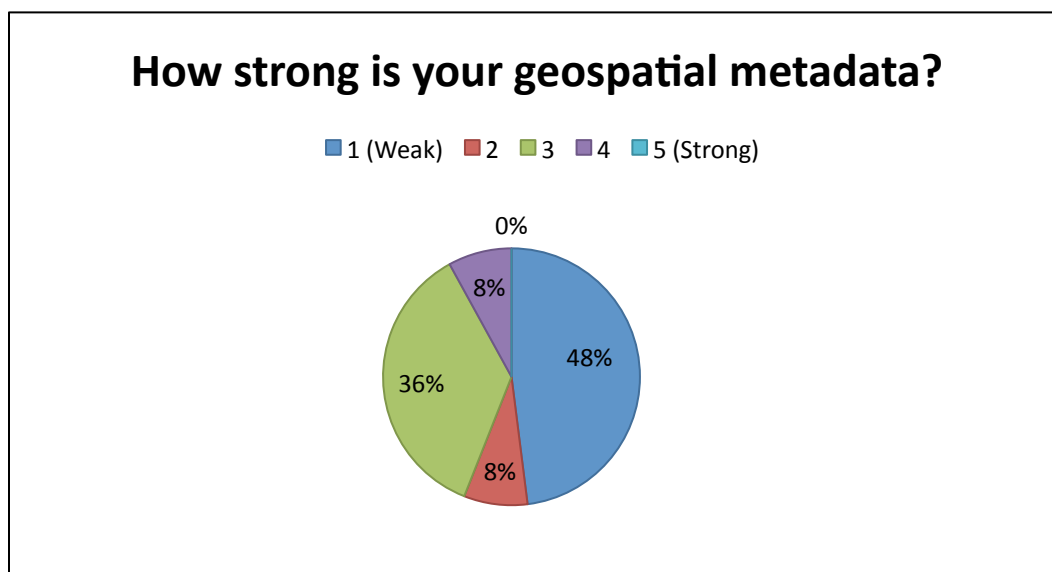
The data from the survey indicate many partners are keenly aware of their need for a more complete approach to geospatial metadata, and quite a few will need additional support in achieving any standards or initiatives adopted by the task force. A detailed analysis of the results of the survey with selected visual representations is presented below.

## Analysis

1. The survey had 25 respondents from 24 MWDL partner institutions. Of these 24 institutions, 15 are UALC member libraries (a 100% response rate from UALC members), and 9 are MWDL partners outside UALC proper.

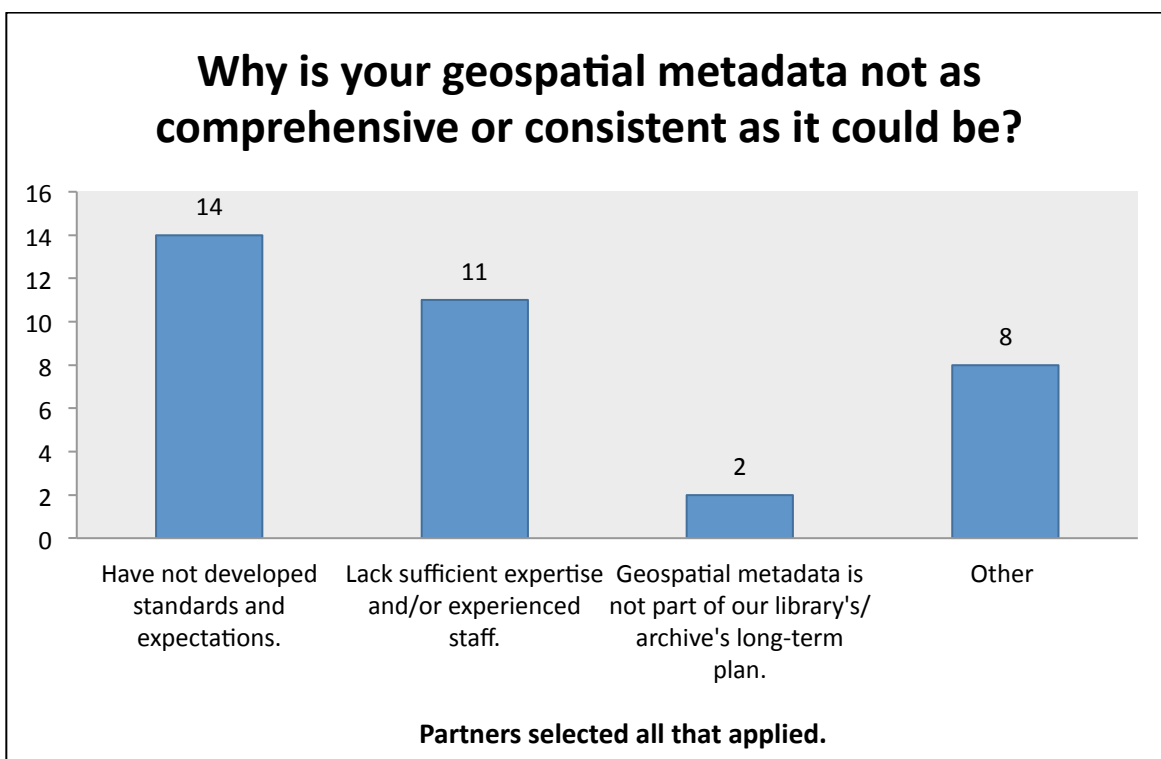
- Brigham Young University - Harold B. Lee Library
- Brigham Young University - Howard W. Hunter Law Library
- Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Springville (UT)
- LDS Church History Library
- Arizona Memory Project at the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records
- Dixie State College Library
- Nevada State College Library
- North Bingham County (ID) District Library
- Salt Lake Community College Libraries
- Snow College Libraries
- Southern Utah University - Sherratt Library
- Uintah County (UT) Regional History Center
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas, University Libraries
- University of Nevada, Reno, University Libraries
- University of Utah - J. Willard Marriott Library (Digital Library)
- University of Utah - J. Willard Marriott Library (Cataloging and Metadata)
- University of Utah - S.J. Quinney Law Library
- University of Utah - Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library
- Utah State Archives
- Utah State History
- Utah State Library
- Utah State University - Merrill-Cazier Library
- Utah Valley University Library
- Weber State University - Stewart Library
- Westminster College – Giovale Library

2. Most respondents rated their geospatial metadata low on comprehensiveness and consistency. When asked “How strong is your geospatial metadata on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being extremely comprehensive and consistent?” only 2 of the respondents (8%) rated their own geospatial metadata as either “4” or “5”. Twelve respondents (48%) rated their metadata as “1”, while 2 respondents (8%) answered “2”, and 9 respondents (36%) placed their rating in the middle, at “3”.



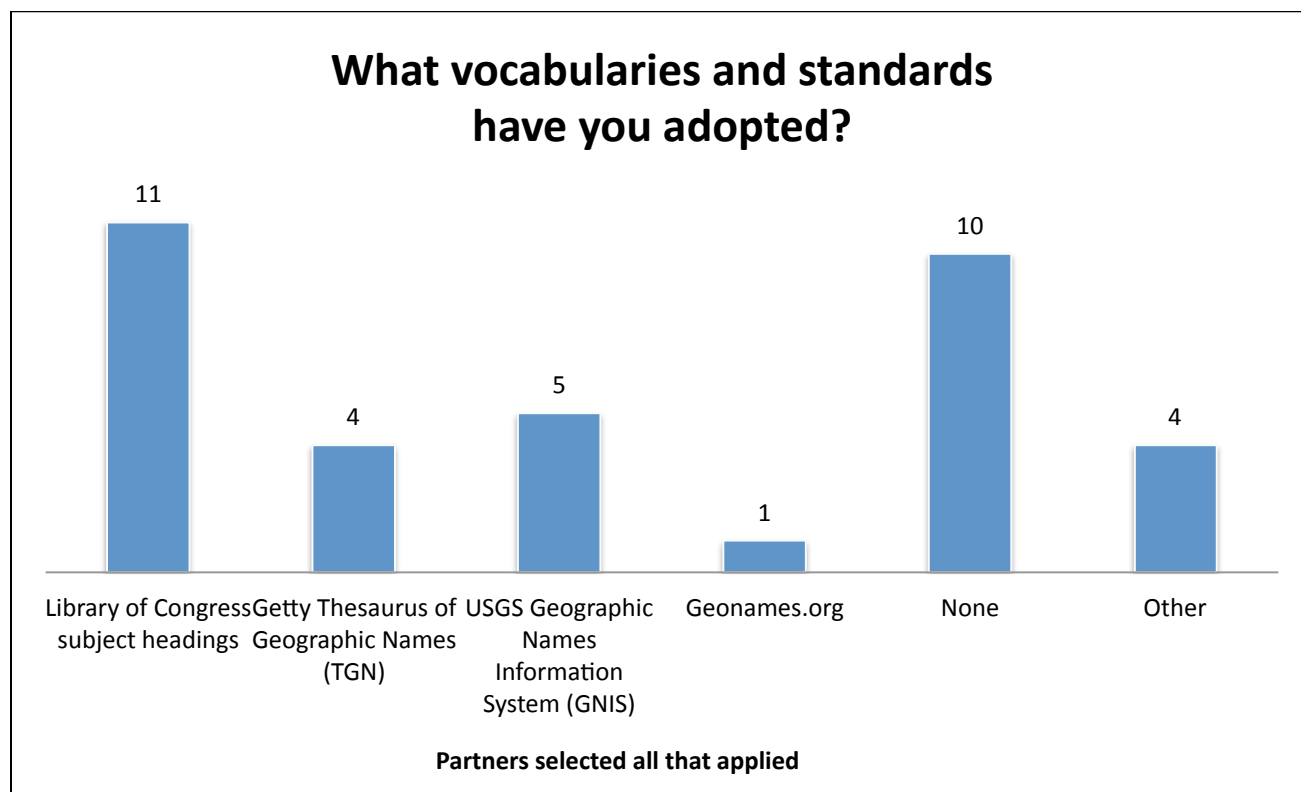
3. The 2 respondents who ranked their geospatial metadata as “4” or “5” attributed it to various factors, including “important component of institutional long-term plan” (2 answers), “developed standards and expectations” (1), “expert and experienced staff” (1), “adopted official vocabularies” (1), and the quality of their research on each entry (1).

4. The 23 respondents who ranked their geospatial metadata as “1”, “2”, or “3” also had a variety of factors in mind when asked “Why is your geospatial metadata not as comprehensive or consistent as it could be?” Fourteen respondents attributed it to lack of standards and expectations, followed by 11 respondents who thought they lacked sufficient expertise and/or



experienced staff. Comments following the question showed that respondents are struggling with resources to work on geospatial metadata assignment. “We currently do not have the staffing to be able to comprehensively and consistently implement geospatial metadata,” said one respondent. “We are a small shop and haven't been able to do as much quality control as we'd like,” said another. Another cited uncertainty about best long-term approaches. A single respondent said, “Geospatial tagging is not really relevant to our collections.”

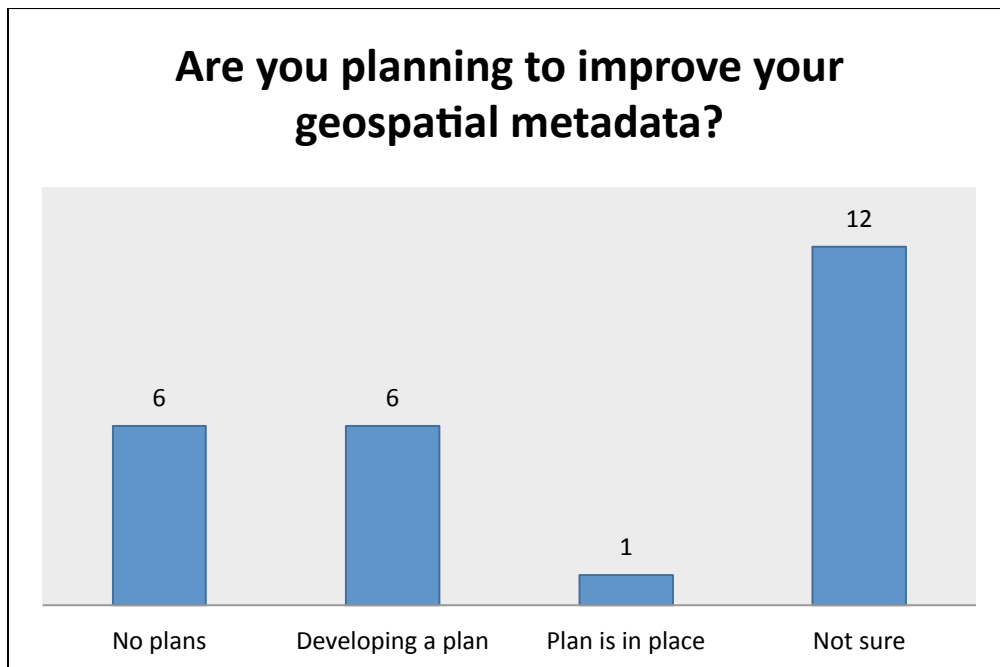
5. When asked about vocabularies and standards their institutions currently implement, ten respondents (40%) answered that they have no vocabularies or standards for geospatial metadata. Among the rest, a variety of vocabularies are in use. The largest number, 11 (44%), use Library of Congress subject headings. In addition, 4 (16%) use the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN), 5 (20%) use the USGS Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), and there was 1 respondent each for Geonames.org, Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata (CSDGM), the vocabulary built into Past Perfect, decimal coordinates from Google Earth, and LDS Church local unit names (congregation hierarchy). No respondent indicated use of the ISO 19115 international standard.



6. Of the 15 who indicated the use of some vocabulary, 7 respondents (47%) indicated that their choice was determined by the wide use and acceptance by digital libraries. Almost as important, with 6 responses (40%), was that the vocabulary was widely used and accepted by academic discipline or technical field. Other responses included that the vocabulary was best suited to

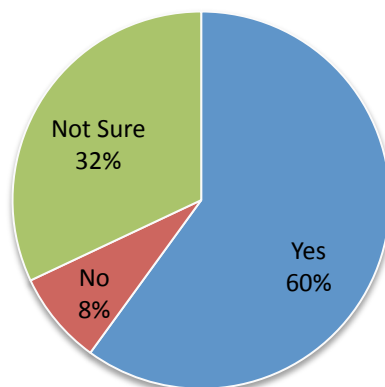
support current metadata projects (3 responses), recommended by a professional organization (3 responses), or mandated by consortium or other collaborative effort (2 responses),

7. For the future, when asked if they are planning to improve their geospatial metadata, 18 respondents (72%) indicated either “No plans” or “Not sure.” Only 7 respondents (28%) either have a plan or are developing a plan. One comment: “We would like to develop a long term plan but are still trying to wade through all the options available and their pros and cons.” Those 7 respondents with or developing plans are willing to share them with the UALC Digitization Committee’s Geospatial Discovery Task Force.



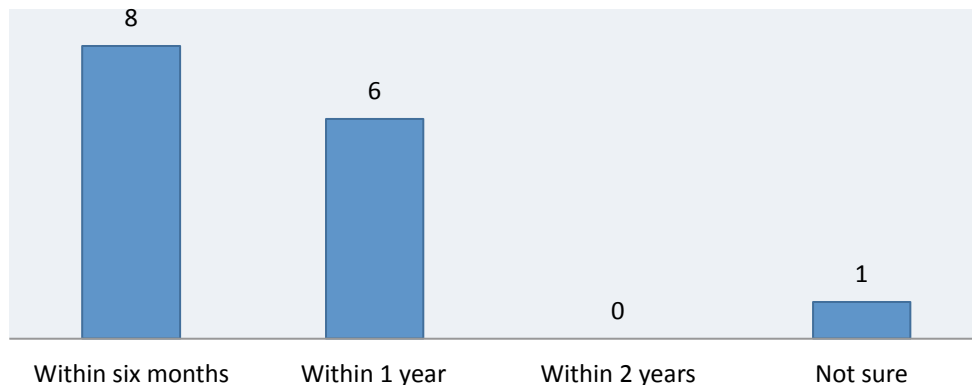
8. If the Geospatial Discovery Task Force adopts new recommendations for geospatial metadata, 15 respondents (60%) said they have the resources to adapt their metadata. Two respondents (8%) said “No” and 8 respondents (32%) said “Not sure”.

**If the Geospatial Discovery Task Force adopts new recommendations for geospatial metadata, do you have the resources to adapt your metadata?**



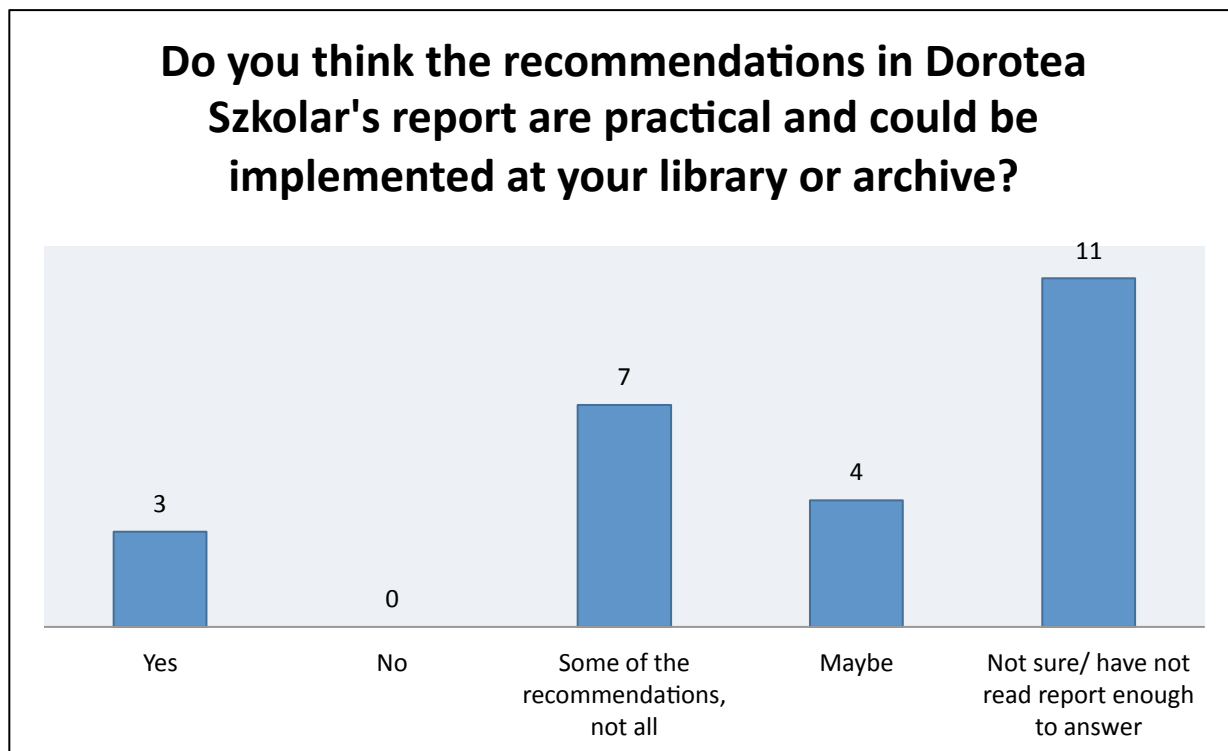
9. Of the 15 respondents who have adequate resources to undertake recommendations adopted by the taskforce, 8 respondents (53%) said they could start to make changes to their geospatial metadata within six months, and 6 respondents (40%) could start within one year. One respondent was not sure.

**How soon could you start to make changes to your geospatial metadata?**



10. Of the 10 respondents who did not have the resources to adapt their metadata, all 10 (100%) said it was because they lacked staff to do so. Additionally, nine (90%) attributed it to lack time, 6 (60%) lack expertise, and 5 (50%) lack funds.

11. When asked whether the recommendations outlined in Dorotea Szkolar’s report, “Recommendations for Geospatial Metadata Standards for Digital Collections in the Mountain West Digital Library,” are practical and could be implemented at their library or archive, 11 respondents (44%) were not sure or hadn’t read the report thoroughly enough to answer. Seven respondents (28%) thought that some of the recommendations, not all, were practical, 4 respondents answered “Maybe,” and only 3 respondents answered “Yes.”



12. On the final question, “Are you willing to participate in the UALC Digitization Committee’s Geospatial Discovery Task Force?” 14 respondents (58%) indicated “Yes” or “Maybe.” Since past UALC task forces have consisted of between two and 12 participants, this is an excellent response and indicates the likelihood of a strong task force effort.