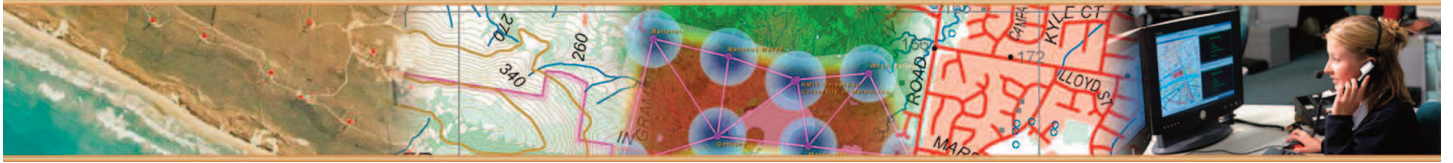


Spatial Data Custodianship



The Custodial Officer

One of the most common questions asked by Spatial Professionals when their organisation becomes a Custodian is “what does this mean for me?” The answer is often “building on what you are already doing, within a clear and formal framework”.

When a Custodian accepts responsibility for the development, storage and maintenance of a dataset, these responsibilities and obligations are delegated to a Custodial Officer. This person must be very clear about their role and management must support them with the right resources.

Initially, the Custodial Officer is responsible for writing the dataset documentation, advising management on quality, access and distribution policy and agreeing the standards by which the data will be maintained. The Custodial Officer is then responsible for the ongoing collection, storage, maintenance and possibly the distribution of the dataset. He or she is the key point of contact, the “authoritative source” of information for that dataset.

Custodial Officers are absolutely key to the success of the Spatial Custodianship. They are “the authoritative source” of information about their dataset.

Responsibilities of the Custodial Officer

- **User Liaison** – Seek input from users to agree standards for quality, accuracy, format, completeness, access, collection and description. Inform users of dataset changes and enhancements. Advise prospective users on proper use and interpretation of datasets.
- **Documentation** – write meaningful product descriptions and metadata. Keep them up to date. Formalise quality standards and usage agreements.
- **Strategy** – monitor and make recommendations on the condition and adequacy of the data to fulfill present and future needs.
- **Update** – manage data collection and maintenance.
- **Quality** – follow agreed schedules of update and review. Monitor dataset integrity and validity.
- **Storage** – ensure datasets are securely stored and backed up.
- **Pricing and licensing** – recommend and implement policies.
- **Access & Distribution** – administer distribution of the dataset and updates to licensed users either directly or through a third party agency.

One or more people may already be performing the role of ‘de facto’ Custodial Officer but it is still important to clarify their responsibilities under the formal Custodianship Programme. They will most probably be expanded because of the more comprehensive documentation and processes.

The detail of the role description will depend on the number and complexity of datasets being managed, frequency of update, whether maintenance is in house or outsourced. It may be full time or part time. It may be split between two individuals; one working more on policy and standards, the other on the practical implementation of these standards.

Optional responsibilities

- **Contract management**
- **Marketing and promotion of datasets**

Skills and Experience

- Planning, management and maintenance of datasets.
- Design, implementation and delivery of spatial information systems or products.
- Knowledge of the sources of raw data for the development of the dataset and a demonstrated ability to set up systems to update the dataset from these sources.
- Ability to work with a wide range of disciplines, business areas and stakeholders to gain co-operation and involvement, solve problems, articulate common goals from among a wide range of individual requirements and understandings, and successfully deliver products and services.
- Well developed communication and presentation skills for persuasion, negotiation and relationship development (user community, customers, contractors, suppliers, partners etc.)
- Attention to detail, particularly in preparing documentation and following procedures.
- Strong corporate orientation and a willingness to contribute actively to the overall leadership of the organisation and benefit of the community.

Do you have a dataset you would like to share?

A series of Fact Sheets explain the issues surrounding Custodianship. These are available on www.land.vic.gov.au/custodian The Spatial Information Infrastructure Group (SII) guides you through the process of becoming a custodian, providing templates, tools and advice. SII provides ongoing support and organises forums where Custodial Officers meet to share ideas and solve problems.