

Use of Ordnance Survey data by commercial publishers

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Sheetlines 94 contained an interesting article² comparing Ordnance Survey mapping published by Ordnance Survey to mapping published by some of our licensed partners. Both the author of the article and others have questioned why Ordnance Survey mapping is now appearing in retail outlets under the branding of other cartographic publishers.

This short note attempts to explain what has led to this situation.

As most of you will know, Ordnance Survey is a government department and Executive Agency, which operates as a Government Trading Fund. The legislation which set up the Trading Fund requires Ordnance Survey to cover all of its operating costs and funding investments in data quality and currency improvements. It also requires Ordnance Survey to meet its financial obligations to government from the revenue gained from licensing use of its data and from sales of paper maps.

Those members of the Charles Close Society who follow the wider political and regulatory environment in which Ordnance Survey operates will recall that in December 2006, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) published a report into its review of the Commercial Use of Public Information (The CUPPI Study). Among the criticisms directed at public sector information producers, and at Ordnance Survey in particular, were assertions that the pricing and licensing arrangements used by public bodies to disseminate their information for re-use by others were causing a hindrance and consequently, having a detrimental impact on the potential for economic benefit for such re-use.

The consequences of the CUPPI report included complex dialogue between Ordnance Survey, OFT and Ordnance Survey's licensed partners to better quantify the issues, and also in parallel, to work with government ministers to respond to the challenges raised.

As a consequence, in Spring 2009, the government published a new business strategy for Ordnance Survey. While the underlying aim was to sustain Ordnance Survey's primary role of maintaining the National Geographical Database for England, Wales and Scotland; to market products and services based on this database, and to license the reproduction of these products and or data within government guidelines, a new focus was set. Ordnance Survey was tasked with improving the ease of access to geographic data and services for both commercial and non-commercial use.

The essence of the strategy was to balance the need to maintain the highest quality standards with the need to stimulate innovation in the geographic information market and make data more widely available and focused on five key areas:

Promoting innovation – with an enhanced free OS OpenSpace service to

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² Richard Oliver, OS mapping from AA and AZ, *Sheetlines* 94, 10.

allow experimentation with digital information and a clear path from this service to greater commercialisation

Reforming Ordnance Survey's licensing framework – so that it is much simpler to work with us and use Ordnance Survey data and services in other applications

Reducing costs over time – to ensure that Ordnance Survey continues to offer value-for-money in line with other government departments and agencies

Supporting the sharing of information across the public sector – to enable better public policy and services

Creating an innovative trading entity – to explore commercial opportunities around providing a better platform for consumers to access Ordnance Survey products aimed at the leisure market.

This strategy was further developed in November 2009 with the Prime Minister's announcement that a portfolio of Ordnance Survey datasets would be made available for free re-use by all, including commercially. As a result, the culmination of work that began in April 2009 has resulted in two phased advances that have influenced and shaped pricing and licensing development.

Initially, the most notable impact was the launch on 1 April 2010 of the OS OpenData™ portfolio, to meet the Prime Minister's 'free data' announcement, under an agreement funded by government. This was followed later in 2010 by the signing of the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA) for England and Wales which came into operation on 1 April 2011.

As a second phase, a new Ordnance Survey pricing and licensing model for our licensed partners was developed thus enabling greater access by them to Ordnance Survey products and geographic datasets under a simplified structure, culminating in a single contract to cover commercial printed product activities. These changes were introduced during the early part of 2011 to encourage the use of our material in new ways. In commercial markets, the new terms allow our partners to produce paper or electronic mapping from a range of our data products. There are no minimum or maximum print runs and no size restrictions on the printed products.

As a result, cartographic publishers may now licence, and republish Ordnance Survey mapping information published at scales of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 as sheet map series. Following the introduction of these changes, some publishers acting as Ordnance Survey licensed partners, such as AA Publishing and Geographers' A-Z, have published products using Ordnance Survey mapping at these scales. We would expect that consequently products made available into the market would increase in number and diversity, thus providing a greater choice. Such publishers will use their judgement to make commercial decisions on what to create and publish as they are not required to produce and maintain national coverage as Ordnance Survey is committed to do.

Ordnance Survey will supply to our Licensed Partners the latest datasets we have available, but of course it will be for each Partner to determine their own business decisions on what material they use in each product they produce and