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# Geographic information — Reference model —

## Part 1: Fundamentals

*Information géographique — Modèle de référence —  
Partie 1: Principes de base*



Reference number  
ISO 19101-1:2014(E)

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#)

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 211, *Geographic information/Geomatics*.

This first edition of ISO 19101-1, together with ISO/TS 19101-2:2008, cancels and replaces ISO 19101:2002.

ISO 19101 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Geographic information — Reference model*:

- *Part 1: Fundamentals*
- *Part 2: Imagery* [Technical Specification]

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## Introduction

Beyond the needs within traditional applications of digital geographic information, users of information technology recognize that indexing by location is fundamental in the organization and the use of digital data. Nowadays, digital data from multiple sources of a wide variety are being referenced to locations and used in various applications. Such data are now extensively distributed and shared over the Web. In fact, the Web is an important source of knowledge in which geographic information plays a significant role. Standardization in the field of geographic information is therefore imperative to support and simplify the sharing and usage of geographic information of different sources, i.e. interoperability.

Standardization in geographic information is a complex task that addresses multiple aspects encompassing the definition of interoperability of geographic information, fundamental data types such as for spatial and temporal information, modelling rules, the semantics of real world phenomena, metadata, services, etc. As such, a reference model is required in order to achieve this task in an integrated and consistent manner. A reference model in geographic information consists of a comprehensive view providing an abstract description of the elements that might compose the field of geographic information and their interrelations. One of the primary goals of this reference model is to define and describe interoperability of geographic information, addressing system, syntactic, structural, and semantic levels. The definition of interoperability of geographic information will then serve as the underpinning for standardization in geographic information. It contributes to

- increase the understanding and usage of geographic information,
- increase the availability, access, integration, and sharing of geographic information,
- promote the efficient, effective, and economic use of digital geographic information and associated hardware and software systems, and
- enable a unified approach to addressing global ecological and humanitarian problems.

This part of ISO 19101 defines the ISO reference model dealing with geographic information. This reference model provides a guide to structuring geographic information standards in a way that it will enable the universal usage of digital geographic information. It sets out the fundamentals for standardization in geographic information including description, management, and services, and how they are interrelated to support interoperability within the geographic information realm and beyond to ensure interoperability with other information communities. As such, this part of ISO 19101 develops a vision for the standardization in geographic information from which it would be possible to integrate geographic information with other types of information and conversely.

The description of the reference model is supported by a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is a mechanism to structure the scope of the standardization activity in geographic information according to the interoperability description. It identifies the various facets of standardization and the relationships that exist between them.

This reference model settles the role of semantics, how the new technologies such as the Web and many emerging ways of accessing it, and how the Semantic Web can support interoperability in the field of geographic information. It also provides an umbrella under which additional specific reference models on particular facets of geographic information standardization would be required.

The reference model is organized in five clauses. [Clause 5](#) describes interoperability in the context of geographic information from a communication and an e-government perspective. [Clause 6](#) identifies the foundations of the reference model and sets the scope (requirements) for the ISO geographic information standardization activities. [Clause 7](#) identifies the requirement for the abstraction of the real world. The reference model for ISO standardization in geographic information is specified in [Clause 8](#) along with its specific requirements. Finally, profiles related to ISO geographic information standards are introduced in the [Clause 9](#).

This part of ISO 19101 is the first part of the reference model. Additional parts can be developed to address concerns, elements, and structures in distinct areas. As such, part 2 of the reference model addresses specific aspects on imagery.

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To achieve these goals, standardization of geographic information in the ISO geographic information standards is based on the integration of the concepts of geographic information with those of information technology. The development of standards for geographic information has to consider the adoption or adaptation of generic information technology standards whenever possible. It is only when this cannot be done that the development of geographic information standards becomes required.

This part of ISO 19101 identifies a generic approach to structuring the ISO geographic information standards. This reference model uses concepts from the Open Distributed Processing – Reference Model (RM ODP) described in ISO/IEC 10746-1<sup>[17]</sup> and other relevant International Standards and Technical Reports. This part of ISO 19101 does not prescribe any specific products or techniques for implementing geographic information systems.

This part of ISO 19101 is intended to be used by information system analysts, program planners, and developers of geographic information standards that are related to ISO geographic information standards, as well as others in order to understand the basic principles of this series of standards and the overall requirements for standardization of geographic information.

This edition of the reference model differs from its previous edition by having a specific focus on the semantic aspects related to interoperability of geographic information by the way of ontologies and knowledge. As such, the definition of interoperability has been revisited in the context of communication. Three foundations for interoperability of geographic information are identified. Based on these foundations and the usual four levels of abstraction, a new conceptual framework is introduced to support the organization of the reference model. The architectural aspect of the previous reference model has been removed in this reference model and will be addressed more specifically in a revision of ISO 19119:2005. This version of the reference model has no backward compatibility impact on the ISO geographic information suite of standards.