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First edition
2005-12-01

Geographic information — Web map server interface

Information géographique — Interface de carte du serveur web



Reference number
ISO 19128:2005(E)

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Published in Switzerland

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Contents

Page

Foreword.....	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Conformance	1
2.1 Conformance classes and requirements	1
2.2 Basic WMS.....	1
2.3 Queryable WMS.....	1
3 Normative references	1
4 Terms and definitions.....	2
5 Abbreviated terms	3
6 Basic service elements	4
6.1 Introduction	4
6.2 Version numbering and negotiation	4
6.3 General HTTP request rules	5
6.4 General HTTP response rules	7
6.5 Numeric and Boolean values.....	7
6.6 Output formats	8
6.7 Coordinate systems.....	8
6.8 Request parameter rules.....	12
6.9 Common request parameters	13
6.10 Service result	14
6.11 Service exceptions	14
7 Web Map Service operations.....	14
7.1 Introduction	14
7.2 GetCapabilities (mandatory).....	14
7.3 GetMap (mandatory).....	25
7.4 GetFeatureInfo (optional).....	31
Annex A (normative) Conformance tests	34
Annex B (normative) CRS Definitions.....	37
Annex C (normative) Handling multi-dimensional data	44
Annex D (normative) Web Map Service profile of ISO 8601.....	50
Annex E (normative) XML Schemas	52
Annex F (normative) UML model	63
Annex G (informative) Web Mapping Examples.....	68
Annex H (informative) XML examples	71
Bibliography	76

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.

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The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

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.

ISO 19128 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 211, *Geographic information/Geomatics*, from a base document supplied by the Open Geospatial Consortium, Inc.

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Introduction

A Web Map Service (WMS) produces maps of spatially referenced data dynamically from geographic information. This International Standard defines a “map” to be a portrayal of geographic information as a digital image file suitable for display on a computer screen. A map is not the data itself. WMS-produced maps are generally rendered in a pictorial format such as PNG, GIF or JPEG, or occasionally as vector-based graphical elements in Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) or Web Computer Graphics Metafile (WebCGM) formats.

This International Standard defines three operations: one returns service-level metadata; another returns a map whose geographic and dimensional parameters are well-defined; and an optional third operation returns information about particular features shown on a map. Web Map Service operations can be invoked using a standard web browser by submitting requests in the form of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs). The content of such URLs depends on which operation is requested. In particular, when requesting a map the URL indicates what information is to be shown on the map, what portion of the Earth is to be mapped, the desired coordinate reference system, and the output image width and height. When two or more maps are produced with the same geographic parameters and output size, the results can be accurately overlaid to produce a composite map. The use of image formats that support transparent backgrounds (e.g. GIF or PNG) allows underlying maps to be visible. Furthermore, individual maps can be requested from different servers. The Web Map Service thus enables the creation of a network of distributed map servers from which clients can build customized maps. Illustrative examples of map request URLs and their resulting maps are shown in Annex G.

This International Standard applies to a Web Map Service instance that publishes its ability to produce maps rather than its ability to access specific data holdings. A basic WMS classifies its geographic information holdings into “Layers” and offers a finite number of predefined “Styles” in which to display those layers. This International Standard supports only named Layers and Styles, and does not include a mechanism for user-defined symbolization of feature data.

NOTE The Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) Styled Layer Descriptor (SLD) specification [6] defines a mechanism for user-defined symbolization of feature data instead of named Layers and Styles. In brief, an SLD-enabled WMS retrieves feature data from a Web Feature Service [7] and applies explicit styling information provided by the user in order to render a map.