Enhanced Irish-language placename and mapping tools launched

Tools will provide greater access to location information as Gaeilge

Friday 16 May 2014: An enhanced Irish placenames database and a new Irish-language mapping service has been launched today.

The new version of the Placenames Database of Ireland encompasses a number of major enhancements to its public-facing website logainm.ie. The website has been completely redesigned, making it more user-friendly, more easily-navigable, and more visually attractive.

Speaking at today's launch, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Head of School, Fiontar DCU, said that "Technological advancements in recent years have enhanced public access to lots of different types of information. In a country of two languages, it's important that every effort is made to ensure that as much information as possible is available in Irish, as well as English. This is particularly important, not only for students and teachers, but also for people across the world who are interested in exploring their Irish heritage."

Dr Mac Murchaidh described one of the main enhancements to logainm.ie, "We have identified 'place clusters' on the website. These clusters better reflect how people think about 'places' such as Donegal, for example. People don't normally think about the distinction between the various administrative units called 'Donegal' (i.e. the county, town, townland, and electoral division), all of which are stored as distinct objects in the placenames database. They think of just one place, Donegal. The new data structure allows clustered place objects to be grouped and presented in a more user-friendly way."

The website has been enhanced by the inclusion of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) maps, using English and Irish versions of OSi's MapGenie Web mapping service. The Irish-language version, MapGenie Éire, is a completely new map product. It uses map data from OSi and and official Irish-language forms of placenames from the Placenames Database of Ireland.

According to OSi Chief Executive Colin Bray, "MapGenie Éire has been made possible through collaboration between Fiontar in DCU, the Placenames Branch, and Ordnance Survey Ireland. The three organisations have worked together on a matching project since late 2010 to link the dataset of the Placenames Branch with the dataset of OSi. This allowed OSi to produce an Irish version of MapGenie based on toponymic data from the Placenames Branch. The project has also involved an upgrade to MapGenie which now resides on a resilient cloud based infrastructure. I want to congratulate everyone involved for their contribution to this very important project."

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For further information:

Paula Eager, MKC Communications, 01 7038612/ 087 4109910/ paula@mkc.ie

Note to editors

www.logainm.ie is a public website which provides the official Irish-language versions of approximately 100,000 placenames throughout the country. It is also a comprehensive management system for the Placenames Branch for data, archival records and placenames research. First launched on October 1st 2008, the site has had over half a million visitors to date. Students, teachers, journalists, translators and others who need the authoritative Irish form of placenames can find them easily by searching on www.logainm.ie. The site is also of interest to people worldwide who are interested in the heritage, culture and geography of Ireland.

The site contains the following additional features:

- Audio guide to the pronunciation of placenames
- Archival records
- A substantial collection of historical maps
- Educational resources
- Publications and articles on Irish placenames
- Explanatory notes on certain features in placenames and on certain placenames

OSi's webservice, MapGenie, has been successfully up and running since 2010. There are many features and benefits with this web service upgrade, including:

1. The service will now be hosted in two different geographical locations in Ireland on the Amazon Cloud, allowing more flexibility for users.
2. The upgrade of the server will make the incorporation of a printer functionality more compatible,
3. OSi maps will be easier to install on mobile apps and websites, making the service more convenient for our customers,
4. There are more MapGenie layers to choose from giving our customers a wider range of OSi map choices. Only the most current map data is used,
5. More OSi maps i.e. Historic 6" Colour, various Hybrid options and MapGenie Éire, will become available.

The Placenames Branch of the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht is responsible for undertaking research into the placenames of Ireland in order to provide authoritative Irish-language versions of those placenames for official and public use.

Ordnance Survey Ireland is responsible for providing quality mapping and spatial information services to meet society's needs. OSi products and services are widely used in all sectors of Irish society, supporting the social, economic, legislative and administrative functions of the State.

Fiontar is Dublin City University's Irish-medium teaching and research unit.