

From Montserrat to the Falklands and back enthused by data management

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Data are a valuable resource because it provides the basis on which to make decisions. Data management is the development and execution of processes, architectures, policies, practices and procedures in order to manage the data generated by an individual, or a private or public organisation.

Listening to a talk about data management instead of being outside busy in any sort of fieldwork sounds unexciting and perhaps boring to many of us. Luckily, there are people whose job is to promote the importance of data management and its establishment within the organisation for which they work.

Between February and March 2018 the Falkland Islands and Montserrat Governments (FIG and GoM) joined together on a Territory to Territory (T2T) project funded by the JNCC with the intention of exchanging knowledge and skills on data management and on to implement it on small islands. Lavern Ryan and Rondel Meade from Montserrat, both running the GIS unit at the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Land, Housing and Environment (MATHLE), travelled to the Falklands to work with iLaria Marengo, data manager of the IMS-GIS data centre at SAERI.

The main goal in the two weeks spent in the Falklands was to learn the ropes of data management and how implement its three components, namely documentation, storage and accessibility on the small island of Montserrat. The starting point was data documentation and the objective was to design an online metadata catalogue following the model created for the South Atlantic UKOTs.

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Data documentation is the first step of data management. It increases productivity within an organisation as it makes easier for people to find and understand information that they need to do their job. In addition, understanding which data have been already collected allows individual and organisations to avoid unnecessary duplication and to save money and resources; in fact people will be made aware as to what data exists so that they would not conduct the same analysis, research or work that has already been completed by others. Finally, data documentation provides the structure for information to be easily shared with others and to be stored for future reference and easy retrieval.

With the above in mind and considering what the Government of Montserrat needed, Lavern, Rondel and iLaria designed a metadata entry form based on the standard ISO 19139. Only the mandatory fields have been retained in order to keep the form straightforward and to allow for quicker completion. The next step was to build the online tool that allows persons to search for keywords and retrieve the metadata records. Finally, the last step was to fill in the metadata records with the information that Lavern and Rondel had gathered in Montserrat from their colleagues at MATHLE.

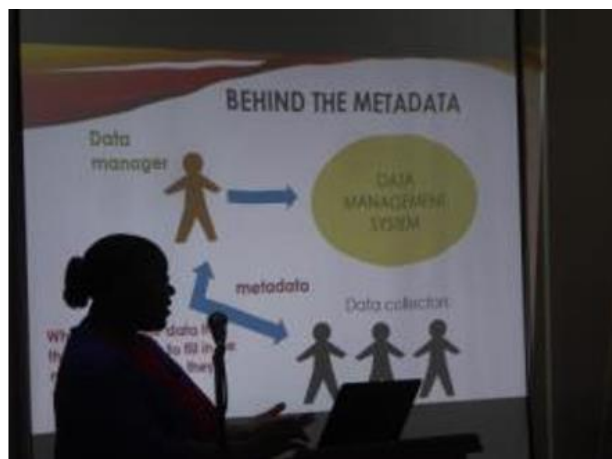
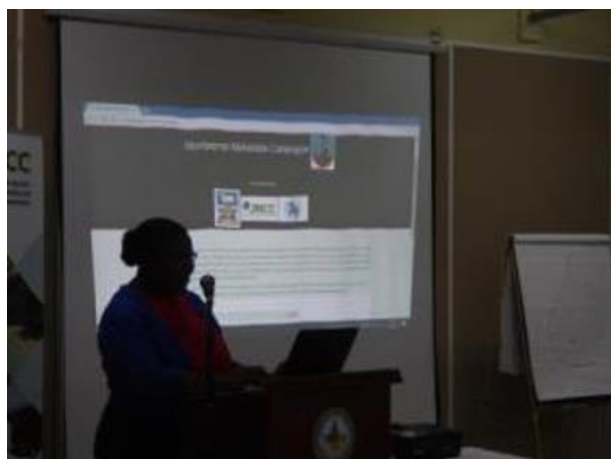
While in the Falklands, Lavern and Rondel met up with government officers to share their experience in delivering GIS services within GoM. The National GIS Day, which Lavern and Rondel organise and promote every November on their island, raised the interest of many FIG officers. The event is an annual opportunity to showcase the outcomes of what GIS does to improve and support the work and the decision making of government officers and to raise awareness of the impact that this technology is having in the development of Montserrat. Montserrat uses this Open Day to share experiences and to educate all ages about the benefits of GIS. Thus, in the future it is likely that a similar event will be realised also in the Falklands.

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A trip to the Falklands cannot end without seeing the local wildlife. The weekend gave the opportunity to enjoy what the islands offers at its best: dolphins, penguins and sea lions!



A week after Lavern and Rondel's departure from the islands, it was iLaria's turn to pack her luggage and travel north to Montserrat. The aim of the trip was to prepare for the launch of the metadata catalogue online. At the Physical Planning Unit, GIS Centre in Brades, the trio worked actively to create the webpage that would host the catalogue. Thanks to the additional IT help of Manish Valechha and Barry Kaye the webpage and the search tool were completed. On the 21st of March, 2018 the Montserrat metadata catalogue was officially launched at the Disaster Management Co-ordination Agency, with approximately thirty persons attending the event. With the full support of the Ministry the metadata catalogue is the first step of GoM data management system. More to come in the next months, such as a data policy, data visualisation tools and a server for storing the data securely!



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A trip to Montserrat cannot end without seeing some of the island's natural beauties. The weekend gave the opportunity to see more of the footprint left by the volcano eruptions and explore the lush and dense forest which gives to Monserrat the epithet of "Emerald Island" of the Caribbean Sea.

