

# conference report



OPENSTREETMAP (OSM) celebrated its third year of existence with its first conference, titled "State of the Map", which was run on the 14th and 15th of

July. The project started in 2004 – or to be more precise, the domain OpenStreetMap.org was registered on 9th August, 2004 at 18:47:25 UTC. OpenStreetMap is an open Geodata project, which means that it builds on the concepts and methods of open source software development and applies them to the collection of geographical information.

The project is based on the concept of wikipedia: any user of the system can register and contribute to the content of the system without a lot of complication. In this case, the participants in the project collect geographical information using generic GPS receivers, edit the information in an open source editing environment and then submit it to a centralised database, so it can be shared with other users.

**Project growth** Over the past three years, the project has experienced tremendous growth. Today,

Yahoo!, Multimap, Nestoria, AND, Geocommons and Manchester University, where the conference was held. The range of talks demonstrated the depth and breadth of OSM.

**Range of debate** The two keynote talks were given by **Steve Coast**, the project founder and leader, and by **Ed Parsons**, Geospatial Technologist at Google. Steve gave an overview of the project and emphasised the way in which OSM is continuously evolving, Ed positioned OSM in relationship to traditional GI data collection, pointing to the democratisation of data collection and the emergence of the amateur professional.

The other talks covered the range of topics that are of interest to the OSM community. These include the importance of Open Geodata in disaster recovery situations, cartographic aspects of map production and utilisation of OSM information, new tools for visualisation of GI (OSMarender and Mapnik) (which can be utilised in other contexts and are worth the attention of the wider GI community), usability and interaction issues with OSM and the development of classification and tagging scheme for OSM (in other

## State of the Map

OpenStreetMap's first conference considered the project's achievements so far – and how it is evolving for the future. **Muki Haklay** reports on the highlights of this event.

over 9000 people are registered to the system and have contributed to the common map. At the end of 2006, Yahoo! has allowed OSM to use its aerial imagery as a background to the mapping and, by so doing, enabled much more efficient and rapid data collection, as it is not based on GPS tracks only. Most recently, Automotive Navigation Data (AND) – a Dutch software company – has contributed the entire map of the Netherlands to OSM, making it the first country in the world that is completely covered by open Geodata.

These achievements provided the background for an excellent conference, with over 100 participants from around the world bringing together their diverse backgrounds – participants in mapping projects, developers of the software used in OSM,

developers of new modes of geographical information delivery (so called neo-geography), academics and even a handful of experienced GIS users. It is interesting though to notice how few of the mainstream GI community of vendors and users showed interest in this project.

State of the Map was sponsored by Google,

words, an ontological framework). Reports from Spain and Netherlands were very refreshing. In Spain, the OSM community is endorsed and supported by the national mapping agency and has already imported the whole geodetic control network to the OSM database. In the Netherlands, that project received support at government level, as well as through the provision of AND data.

Concurrently with the talks, workshops were held covering the issues of surveying, development of new data collection tools – such as the bicycle-mounted GPS data collection system (FridaV) – and many other topics.

**Problem to be sorted?** Central to SOTM was a discussion about the licensing issue. Now that OSM has got a significant coverage in several countries, it is ready to be used in a wide range of applications. However, the current licence (the "Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 licence") creates difficulties in any commercial application – even the production of a tourist map that should be sold locally. The reason is that, in a restrictive interpretation, the licence means that any output that is based on OSM data must be shared with the world without restrictions. This issue is being discussed within the OSM community and it is hoped that a solution to this will be found soon to allow the wider use of this fantastic resource.

The graph below shows the growth in OSM users uploading and editing nodes (Courtesy of OSM).

