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## Improving Michigan Access to Geographic Information Networks

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### *the imagin project - introduction*

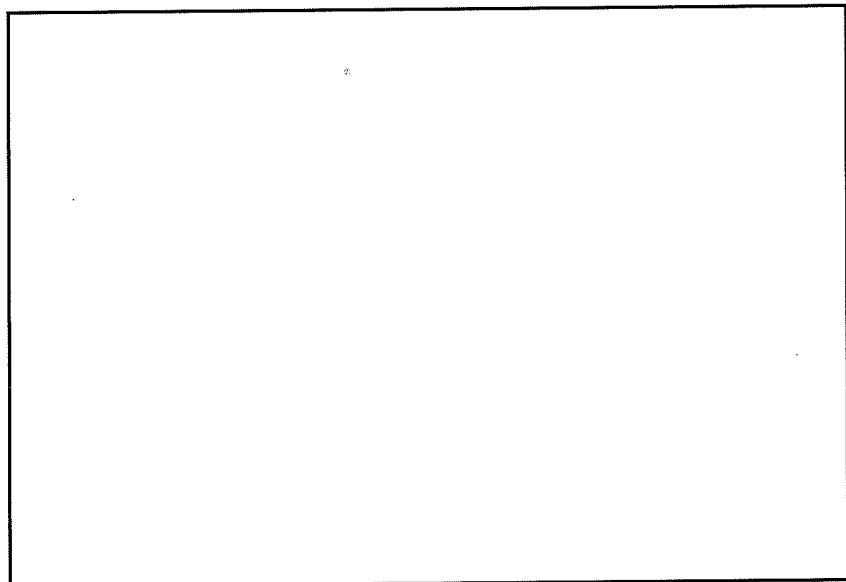
A three-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will support a unique multi-agency project to improve computer mapping and data exchange in Michigan. IMAGIN — standing for “Improving Michigan Access to Geographic Information Networks” — is a joint effort of the Legislative Service Bureau, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Michigan State University (MSU) and the Library of Michigan to develop new methods and standards for geographic data exchange and to improve the application of these data in state and local decision making. IMAGIN will also provide for better GIS training opportunities and the cooperative development of computer systems for public access to this information. Ultimately, all citizens will have the ability to directly review mapped information concerning the state’s natural and cultural resources.

#### **Background**

In 1979, the Michigan Resource Inventory Act (1979, PA204) directed the DNR to conduct an inventory of land and water

resources and current land use for application by local, regional, and state natural resource managers and planners. This inventory and related information is being compiled in a computer mapping system referred to as the Michigan Resource Information System or MIRIS. Although originally designed to produce only paper maps, this geographic information system is now

widely accepted as an important electronic resource for state and local land use decisions. With DNR support, the MSU Center for Remote Sensing has developed a versatile computer software package called C-Map to make MIRIS available to technicians and decision makers at all levels of government using personal computers (PCs). In addition, C-Map allows the conversion of MIRIS data into



At the computer is Bill Enslin, manager of the Center for Remote Sensing at Michigan State University. Looking on are (left to right): deputy state librarian Jeffrey P. Johnson of the Library of Michigan, Mike Beaulac of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Joseph VanderMeulen, director of the science and technology division at the Legislative Service Bureau.

formats used in a broad array of inexpensive geographic information systems (GIS).

Today, over 130 agencies across the state use C-Map and MIRIS for information management and decision making. Challenges remain, however, in efficiently moving digital data between DNR and other public agencies, in converting data and applying it to different GIS formats in local settings, and providing agency staff better training and citizens greater access to this publicly-owned information resource.

### **The IMAGIN Project**

Over the next three years, IMAGIN will support several inter-related efforts to improve methods of GIS data exchange and management. Working with MSU, the DNR will develop a new MIRIS distribution system based on CD-ROM (Compact Disc - Read Only Memory) technology. By capturing MIRIS on CDs, the DNR will be able to issue the entire data base at regular intervals in a format that is inexpensive to reproduce and easily accessible to all PC users.

IMAGIN will support new efforts at MSU to improve the

C-Map software and assure adequate training and technical support services for all users.

The technical support will include assistance in converting, transferring, and updating MIRIS files for both state and local use. In addition, IMAGIN will offer public agencies access to hands-on professional training courses in the use of C-Map, MIRIS, and the application of various GIS analytical techniques.

Working with the Science and Technology (S&T) Division of the Legislative Service Bureau and MSU, the Library of Michigan will develop computer systems for providing library patrons access to MIRIS and other computerized geographic information. IMAGIN will support the use of new computer display systems to make this unique, publicly-owned data base available to everyone — whether trained in computer use or not. In the third year, the Library of Michigan will install three stand-alone systems in local public libraries to demonstrate these new methods of public access. Libraries across the state will be encouraged to adopt similar systems to give all citizens access to our expanding geographic data bases.

The IMAGIN Project will also support the work of the Science and Technology Division in coordinating the exchange of data between state and local agencies. These efforts are intended to bring about improvements in geographic information sharing and the application of this information in state and local public policy processes. Additionally, the S&T Division will contribute new statewide maps in response to the requests of state legislators and developments in the state public policy process.

### **The IMAGIN Participants**

To help achieve all of its goals, the IMAGIN partners are seeking individuals from a broad spectrum of state, local, and federal agencies to participate in this innovative project as members of advisory panels, C-Map beta test sites and data sharing pilot projects. Participants will help define basic standards and procedures for GIS data sharing in the State of Michigan. If you have questions about IMAGIN or are interested in participating in the project please contact any of the following individuals:

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