

Spatial Data Custodianship



The Role of the Custodial Officer

When their organisation becomes a Custodian, data managers will ask “what does this mean for me?” The answer is often “building on what you are already doing, within a clear and formal framework”.

When a Custodian accepts responsibility for the development, storage and maintenance of a dataset, these responsibilities and obligations are delegated to a Custodial Officer. This person must be very clear about their role and management must support them with the right resources.

Initially, the Custodial Officer is responsible for documenting the dataset (Metadata), advising management on quality, access and distribution, and agreeing the standards to which the data will be maintained. This brings significant internal benefits. Putting the spotlight on data that is used to support decision making within your organisation results in it being better documented and organised.

The detail of the role description will depend on the number and complexity of datasets being managed, frequency of update, whether maintenance is in house or outsourced. It may be full time or part time. It may be split between two individuals; one working more on policy and standards, the other on the practical implementation of these standards.

The Custodial Officer is then responsible for the ongoing collection, storage, maintenance and supply of the dataset. He or she is the key point of contact, the “authoritative source” of information about that dataset.



The Custodial Officer agrees standards for data collection

Responsibilities of the Custodial Officer

User Liaison - seek input from users to agree standards for quality, accuracy, format, completeness, access, collection and description. Inform users of dataset changes and enhancements. Advise prospective users on proper use and interpretation of datasets.

Documentation – write metadata. Keep it up to date. Formalise quality standards. Prepare funding submissions for collection or enhancement of data.

Strategy - monitor and make recommendations on the condition and adequacy of the data to fulfil present and future needs.

Update – manage data collection and maintenance.

Quality – follow agreed schedules for update and review. Monitor dataset integrity and validity.

Storage – ensure datasets are securely stored and backed up.

Access & Distribution – Ensure processes are in place to automatically upload dataset updates to the Victorian Spatial Data Library or your repository

Custodial Officers are absolutely key to the success of the Spatial Custodianship. They are “the authoritative source” of information about their dataset.

One or more people may already be performing the role of ‘de facto’ Custodial Officer but it is still important to clarify their responsibilities under the formal Custodianship Program. They will most probably be expanded because of the more comprehensive documentation and processes.

The Victorian Spatial Council (VSC) has directed the Spatial Information Infrastructure Division in the Department of Sustainability and Environment to manage the Custodianship Program on its behalf.

[Spatial Information Infrastructure](#)

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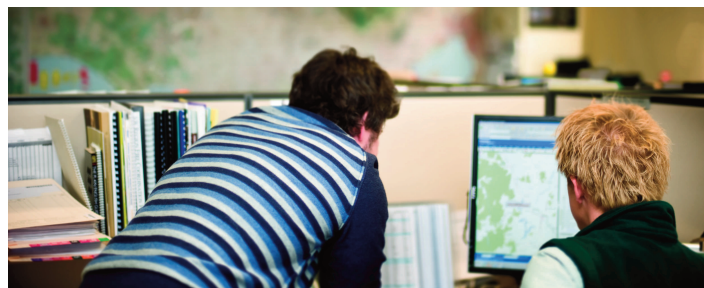


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Preferred Skills and Experience

- Planning, management and maintenance of datasets.
- Design, implementation and delivery of spatial information systems or products.
- Knowledge of the sources of raw data for the development of the dataset and a demonstrated ability to set up systems to update the dataset from these sources.
- Ability to work with a wide range of disciplines, business areas and stakeholders to gain co-operation and involvement, solve problems, articulate common goals from among a wide range of individual requirements and understandings, and successfully deliver products and services.
- Well developed communication and presentation skills for persuasion, negotiation and relationship development (customers, contractors, suppliers, partners etc.)
- Attention to detail, particularly in preparing documentation and following procedures.
- Strong corporate orientation and a willingness to contribute actively to the overall leadership of the organisation and benefit of the community.



Contact

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Do you have a dataset you would like to share?

A series of Fact Sheets explain the issues surrounding Custodianship. These are available on www.victorianspatialcouncil.org

The Spatial Information Infrastructure Group (SII) in the Department of Sustainability and Environment guides you through the process of becoming a custodian, providing templates, tools and advice. SII provides ongoing support and forums where Custodial Officers meet to share ideas and solve problems.

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