

A Place for Everything and Everything in its Place: the architecture behind A Vision of Britain

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This paper builds on an earlier presentation of the Vision of Britain system, looking at the underlying data models and technology. The first half of the paper explains how the digital boundaries and demographic statistics created by the original Great Britain Historical GIS project during the 1990s have been re-organised. In the original Arc GIS-based system, statistics were treated as attributes of polygons, but in the new Oracle-based system both are attributes of administrative units which are formally defined in an ontology. One result is that the new system can hold information about historical units whose locations are unknown. The second half of the paper will explain how a wider range of content has then been linked in, including census reports, historical gazetteers, and large libraries of census reports and travel writing. A series of metadata standards have played a central role in defining the system's architecture, including the Open Geospatial Consortium's Web Map Server standard, the Alexandria Digital Library's Gazetteer Content Standard, the Data Documentation Initiative and the Text Encoding Initiative Guidelines.