

Advantages of digital maps over hard copies

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Abstract

Maps are very important documents presenting the findings of geoscientists in a concise and easily visualised form. Yet traditional methods have been hindering quick production of maps. The method used is cumbersome. A geoscientist would start the process by going to the field and recording every outcrop in sight while missing those that are not exposed. However, non-exposure does not necessarily mean non-existence. It may be due to either thick vegetation coverage, soil mantle of unfavourable topographic conditions. Field compilation, drafting, cartographic work and editing would also be time consuming chores preceding the production of a final version of a map. Modern technology has simplified the map production process. Remote sensing techniques have at least reduced the time by 70%, simplified the job by 50% and are likely to save money by 90%. A geologist needs only to go to the field to verify the remotely sensed data.

In addition through desk top publication software, computers have tremendously simplified the cartographic duties. Different maps from different scale and authors can be digitised easily. The production of digital maps has much advantage over hard copies especially as far as manipulation is concerned. This paper discusses in detail the comparative advantages of digitised maps over those produced conventionally in terms of both quality and ease of manipulation. It is further stressed that digital maps can easily be transformed into hard copies any time as per requested. Digital maps are mainly used in developed countries, but the author is throwing a challenge to geoscientists in Tanzania and other developing countries in general to adopt usage of this advanced technology especially as we are approaching the 21st century.