

Panel discussion

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I would first like to thank the organizers of the 19th International Seminar on Sea Names (Sea, Sea Names, and Mediterranean Peace) for including a paper session that highlighted geography education aspects of geographical naming. The session provided an opportunity to showcase developments in the teaching of geography in Turkey, the traditional and contemporary role of geographical names on maps and in textbooks for college and university level geography education, and model curriculum being implemented in South Korea in geography education with attention to naming. Each of those topics represents an important contact point between teaching geography and students learning the importance of geographical naming in the 21st century.

Geography at times in its academic growth and development has been both admired and criticized for its focus on names. Geographical names have been significant components of the disciplines academic heritage and are widely recognized for their role in establishing a learned world view among both students in school and in their post school years. In geography education in the United States there is a widespread expressed opinion that geographical names are too widely used in geography teaching. The opinions of many geographers in the United States, for example, are that geographical names, or place names, detract from the basic scientific work of geographers and reflect poorly on the potential of the discipline to gain stature within the scientific community. The general public's perception of geography is often represented by a long list of place names. On the other hand, many people are surprised that the discipline noted for its command of and scientific research on geographical names should relegate the topics to a lesser role in both teaching and research. There is clearly a need for balance within the geography education curriculum so that significant geographical naming information is acquired by students in an engaging manner.

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Geographic names are the reference points for people and organizations that require the information necessary to answer questions and address major issues about Earth. The maps prepared by cartographers must correctly locate places relative to a coordinate system. Authors of gazetteers must provide accurate locational data, spelling and pronunciation references. Students need the opportunity to experience the important contributions that geographical naming makes to understanding the world. While students once examined printed maps in textbook and atlases, they more regularly use electronic maps such as those provide on the Internet. Google Earth, for example, provides multiple layers of geographical features and places that may be displayed or removed by selecting the map features from a menu. The geospatial technology also permits variations in geographical naming whereby a place may be represented by a different name when the data stream is to be downloaded. A geographical name used in one country may be represented differently in other countries. The power of the technology in representing geographical features, including names, is an important topic that students should experience in their geography studies. Education of the public is a huge challenge for geography as greater numbers of people realize the importance of geospatial technology in identifying, analyzing, and addressing different issues.

Maps derive meaning from geographical names and names set the context for the map user. Geographical names are the framework around which the discipline of geography becomes applicable to personal and community use. Home, parents and extended family become associated with geographical names and by the time children begin school they have a basic geographical name vocabulary. Geographical names are among the earliest of informal education that individual experience and the information transitions into formal education and lifelong experiences.

Geography education is where toponomy, the research regarding the origin, derivation, and cultural and linguistic heritages of geographical names, should begin and become a featured component of the curriculum. There is a geographical story behind every name that provides significance to it as a place. Toponymy is the geographer's equivalent of a genetic code for human settlement. It answers the question: What is in a name?

Geographical names provide students with opportunities to learn about the world through the scientific inquiry regarding the meaning of toponyms from cultural, historical, and political perspectives. The contributions of the 19th International Seminar on Sea Names have provided the participants an opportunity to delve into the meaning of

sea names and naming issues in the Mediterranean Region. It has also demonstrated the important role that geographical education has in revealing why names are important. The conference has demonstrated that geography and toponymy permit introspection into issues where one plus one has a sum that is greater than two. A sum that is greater than the parts is derived from the added value of the discussions and conclusions that arise from the study of geographical naming. This mathematical summation supports the ideas that there is something more to a name than just the name. The provision of added intellectual challenges when studying geographical naming within the larger context of geography education is a necessary goal for both teachers and students.