Making the World a Better Place: Map by Map, Toponym by Toponym

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Abstract:

As the uses of maps change, egocentric usage turns maps more and more into interfaces (Schiewe, 2022). Toponyms, or place-names play and important role in facilitating how people now use maps. We could say it this way: having better connections between toponyms and maps helps the use of maps, and maybe helps efforts to make the world a better place. Sometimes, that might mean letting omissions and errors be, but other times, knowing more about differences in place names can be very important. This is an important motivation behind work on the digital Gazetteer project (Doroshenko et al, 2023), which we now continue through research to improve the usability of online gazetteers. In the presentation we describe the over-arching concepts, the existing Gazetteer application and conclude with a presentation of our on-going research on using task-orientated usability engineering to develop a better understanding of diverse research tasks using gazetteers including enhancements to the user interface and creating multiple interfaces orientated to different tasks. While the improvement may not lead to better places necessarily, but we believe at least to a better map interface for interdisciplinary research working with toponyms. The application is available at https://gazetteers.net/
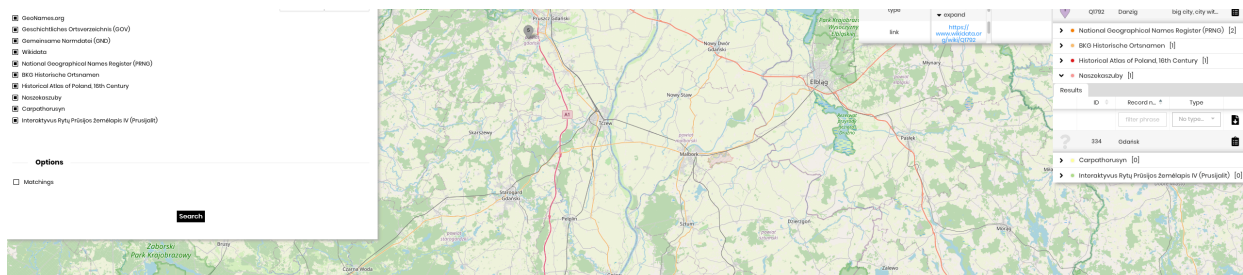
Figure 1. gazetteers.net interface (portion) with example data query from multiple gazetteers.

References

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