

6. CLEARINGHOUSES

A clearinghouse is an institution that collects and distributes information. Clearinghouses began with financial, medical and transportation industries. With the advent of the World-Wide Web, it became possible and advantageous for many organizations to belong to central clearinghouses. Thus, they proliferated. With the popularization of geospatial data and the infrastructure afforded by Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications, clearinghouses for geographic data began to appear.

The Geospatial Data Clearinghouse (<http://registry.fgdc.gov/serverstatus/>) is a collection of over 450 spatial data servers that have digital geographic data primarily for use in GIS, image processing systems, and other modeling software. These data collections can be searched through a single interface based on their descriptions, or “metadata”.