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Didactical and Content-Related Concepts for the Future "Swiss World Atlas Interactive"

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The "Swiss World Atlas" is the well-established and most used printed school atlas in Switzerland with a more than one hundred year old history. In 2010 a web-based and cost-free digital version, the "Swiss World Atlas interactive", was published. It was intended to complement the printed version with numerous interactive functions as well as with different map-representations and didactically valorized modules (i.e. 3D model of earth revolution, map projection module).
The experiences with the interactive atlas within the first three years have shown a predominantly positive user-feedback. However, it must be stated that originally, a more extensive use was expected. User surveys showed that students only occasionally use the interactive atlas in class or for homework. Besides the technical development, the educational requirements have changed fundamentally since the project was launched in 2007. In a period where such an application should be targeted to digital natives, the gap between the functionality of the "Swiss World Atlas interactive" and the current digital trends is growing.

In this study detailed results of previous and ongoing use studies of the interactive atlas will be presented. Using these findings, the current user requirements are extrapolated to conceptualize the next generation of the "Swiss World Atlas interactive". The results of the surveys allow an empirical evaluation depending on user groups and use-purposes. They allow conclusions concerning the technologies (native apps vs. web apps) as well as the desired target platform (desktop, tablet, mobile). Based on this evaluation several possible didactical concepts are derived. With regard to the content, the analysis shows whether an interactive atlas congruent to the printed atlas is required or if it should rather be complementary. Furthermore it will be assessed if new functionality such as crowd-sourced mapping for entire school classes and GIS functionality are options for a future interactive atlas.

Considered conference topics:
Web-based Cartography, National and Regional Paper and Digital Atlases, Map Use and Design