

Multiple-attribute lines in NCGMP09

The NCGMP09 geologic map database schema prescribes the use of multiple attributes for lines in the *ContactsAndFaults* feature class. Many of us are accustomed to using single attributes to describe contacts and faults in our digital map databases, e.g., LTYPE with values of “contact, approximate, queried”, “thrust fault, concealed”, and similar. A few of us have used multiple attributes to describe such lines, but the attributes are not those prescribed by the NCGMP09 schema. This document provides suggestions for transitioning from old habits to new ones.

I start by describing some techniques for working with multiple-attribute lines and conclude with a discussion of NCGMP09 line attributes and some reasons for the change to multiple-attribute lines.

Commands and scripts discussed here work in ArcGIS 10.1, SP1. NCGMP09 is version 1.1 of the schema, available at http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2010/1335/pdf/usgs_of2010-1335_NCGMP09.pdf

Visualize multiple-attribute lines

While editing a database it is convenient to visualize, at the same time, the multiple attributes of the lines in *ContactsAndFaults*.

1. Open up ArcMap. Add several instances of the *ContactsAndFaults* feature class to your data frame.

Rename these instances to (approximately) the attributes to be visualized. Note that *LocationConfidenceMeters* is drawn underneath the other layers.

Highlight all the newly-added layers, right-click, and GROUP the layers. Give the group a useful name, perhaps “*ContactsAndFaults*.”

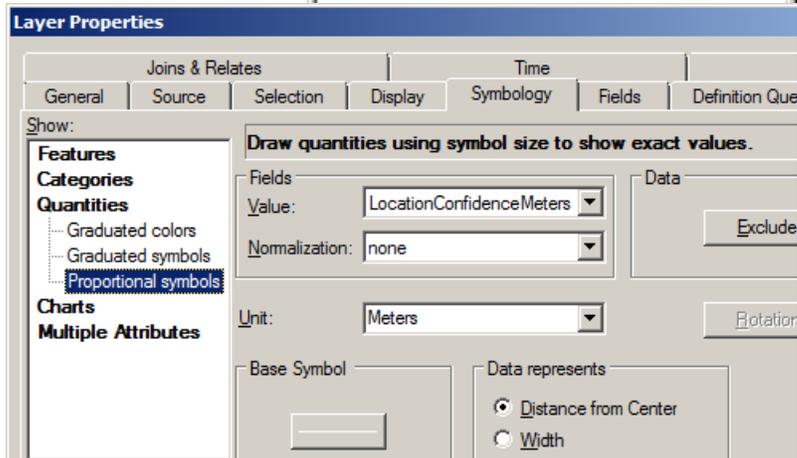
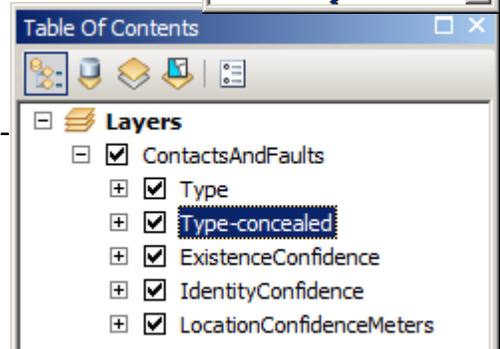
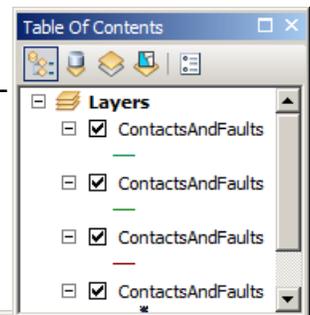
2. Double-click on layer *LocationConfidenceMeters*, or right-click on it and select **Properties...** This will open the Layer Properties window.

Select the **Symbology** tab.

Under **Show:** (left side of **Layer Properties** window), select **Quantities—Proportional symbols**.

Set **Fields Value:** to *LocationConfidenceMeters* and **Normalization** to none. Set **Unit:** to **Meters**. Under **Data represents**, select the **Distance from center** radio-button.

Set **Base Symbol** to a simple zero-width line. I suggest choosing white or an intermediate gray as the line color.



Select the **Display** tab. At the upper left corner of the window, make sure that **Scale symbols when a reference scale is set** is not checked. Set **Transparent:** to an intermediate value (perhaps 50%). Click **OK**.

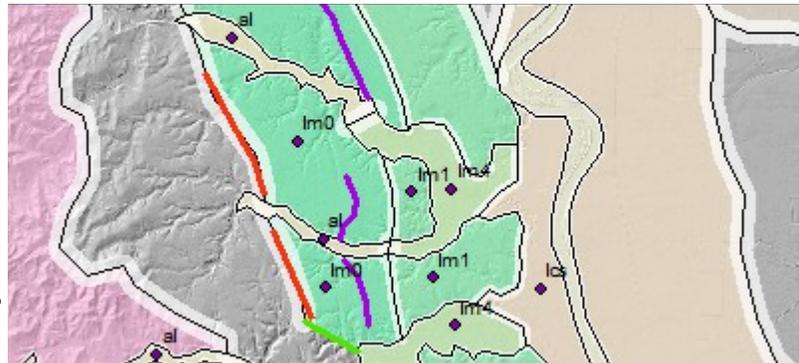
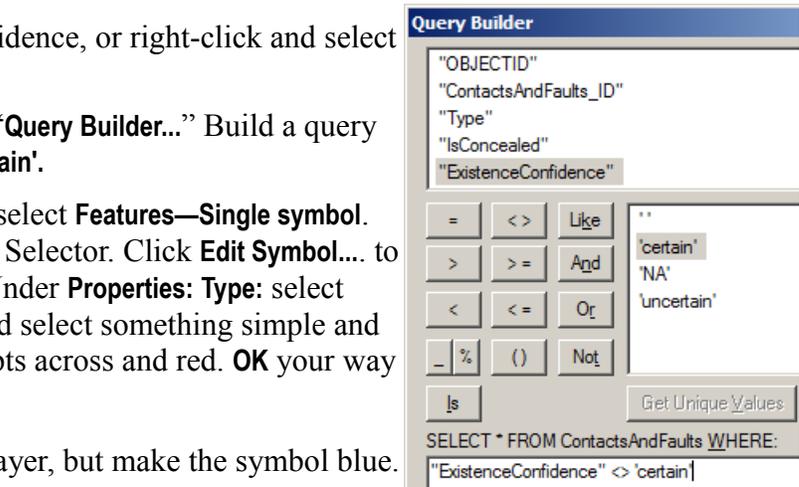
3. Double-click on layer ExistenceConfidence, or right-click and select **“Properties...”**

Select the **Definition Query** tab. Click on **“Query Builder...”** Build a query that selects **“ExistenceConfidence” <> 'certain'**.

Go to the **Symbology** tab. Under Show:, select **Features—Single symbol**. Click on **Symbol** to bring up the Symbol Selector. Click **Edit Symbol...** to bring up the Symbol Property Editor. Under **Properties: Type:** select **Marker Line Symbol**. Click on **Symbol...** and select something simple and open—perhaps a circle. Make it 6 or 8 pts across and red. **OK** your way out.

4. Repeat with the IdentityConfidence layer, but make the symbol blue. Modify the Template (in Symbol Property Editor) so that markers for the IdentityConfidence layer are not superimposed on markers for the ExistenceConfidence layer.

Note that IdentityConfidence and ExistenceConfidence could also be symbolized without definition queries, using **Categories—Unique values** (on the **Symbology** tab).



5. Symbolize Type using **Categories—Unique values**. Simple line symbols—e.g., thin and black for contacts, slightly fatter and red for faults, green for map boundaries, blue for waterlines—will suffice. Avoid dashes and complex patterns. Under **Definition Query**, set the query to **"IsConcealed" = 'N'**.

6. Symbolize Type-concealed similarly. Use dotted-line symbols. Set the definition query to **"IsConcealed" = 'Y'**.

Revise this recipe as necessary.

Use one attribute to set many attributes with Feature Templates

Specifying values for multiple line attributes is a significant amount of work and slows the process of creating new line features. However, if you are among the many who will be content to use clusters of predefined values for the multiple line attributes of the NCGMP09 schema, the **feature templates** available in ArcMap since version 9.3 provide a reasonably satisfactory solution to this problem. Key aspects of feature templates are (1) they provide a point-and-click digitizing menu, and (2) they specify clusters of attribute values.

While the schema allows for an infinite variety of Type and LocationConfidenceMeters values, we need not use this variety. Eventually we hope there are digitizing interfaces that encourage and ease the

use of this variety. NCGMP09 uses multiple line attributes in part to facilitate this change.

1. Create a proxy (or key) attribute in ContactsAndFaults that will signify the clusters of attribute values. Let's call it LTYPE. You can do this manually in ArcMap or ArcCatalog. It is also an option when using the NCGMP09 CreateDatabase script.

2. Make a list of commonly-used clusters of values. It should be relatively short—one or two dozen clusters. Select names for these clusters that indicate the associated attributes and, when sorted alphabetically, produce a useful ordering. Careful use of spaces helps. See the list at right.

3. In ArcMap, add the ContactsAndFaults layer to a map document. Open **Properties...** and set symbolization to **Categories—Unique values**. Set **Value Field** to LTYPE. Use **Add Values** (or **Add All Values**) to add at least one value of LTYPE to the list of symbols. **OK** out.

Note that this requires that you have at least one arc in the ContactsAndFaults feature class with a defined value of LTYPE. Add a temporary arc if you need to.

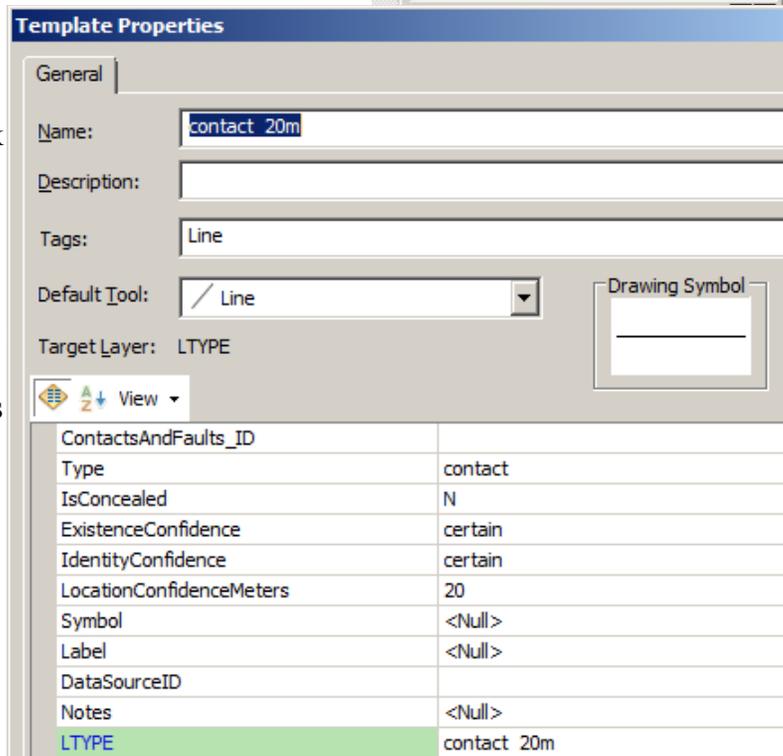
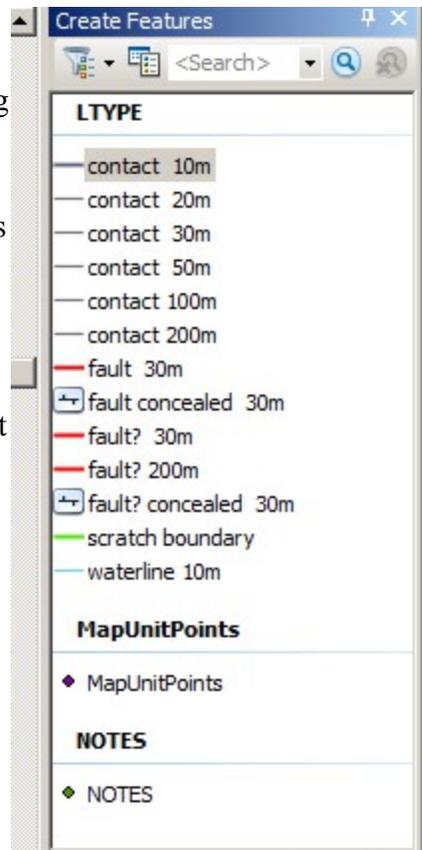
4. Back at the ArcMap Table of Contents, right-click on the ContactsAndFaults layer, select **Edit Features, Organize Feature Templates...** The Organize Feature Templates window will open.

Click on **New Template** which will launch the Create New Templates Wizard. Ensure that the ContactsAndFaults layer is selected (and perhaps that other layers are not) and click **Next >**. You should see a table with one or more templates named with values of LTYPE. Click **Finish**, then **Close**.

5. Back at the ArcMap Table of Contents, right-click on the ContactsAndFaults layer, and select **Edit Features > Start Editing**. You may need to go to the Editor toolbar, click the **Editor ▼** dropdown, and select **Editing Windows > Create Features**. This will bring up the Create Features window which should display the template(s) you created in step 4.

Right-click on a template and select **Properties...** Define attribute values for this particular template. I suggest that Name: and LTYPE be identical. Leave ContactsAndFaults_ID empty. Click **OK**.

Note that **Drawing Symbol** cannot be changed in the Template Properties window—you have to do this at the Table of Contents or in the

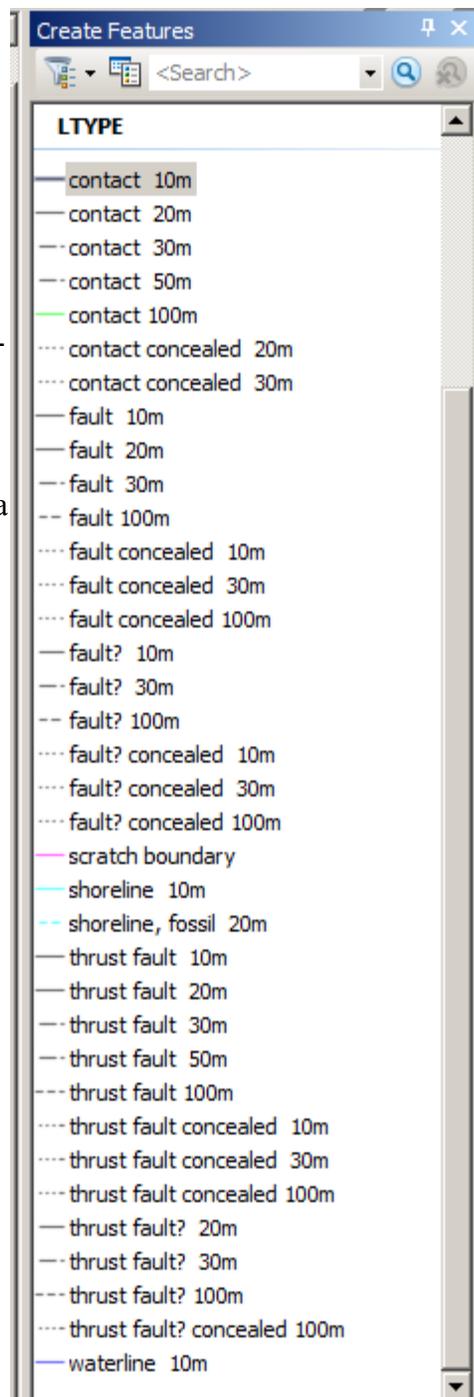


Symbology tab of the Layer Properties window.

Create additional templates by right-clicking on a template and selecting **Copy**. This will immediately create a new template named “Copy of <template name>”—you don't need to Paste. Repeat as needed. For each new template, right-click, select **Properties**, and edit.

Key points:

1. Select template names carefully. ArcMap imposes an alphabetical sort. Use spaces and special characters to get the ordering you need. You may decide that values of template name and LTYPE should be different.
2. The point-and-click Create Features interface works well with a limited number of choices. Thin your template list to only those needed for a particular digitizing project.
3. It is useful to distinguish between editing symbolization and publication symbolization. The symbols we use for publication often aren't sufficiently distinctive for easy editing on a complex backdrop. For a given project I maintain two .mxd files, one for editing and one for the final publication graphic. In the editing .mxd, I symbolize ContactsAndFaults on LTYPE, usually combined with additional instances of ContactsAndFaults for ExistenceConfidence, IdentityConfidence, and LocationConfidenceMeters. In the publication .mxd, I symbolize ContactsAndFaults on Symbol.
4. Creating an effective set of templates takes some time. Save time by saving your completed ContactsAndFaults layer—with sublayers, symbolization, and templates—to a .lyr file. See `ContactsAndFaults24K.lyr`, included with the NCGMP09 toolset available on the NGMDB project web site. For your next project, load this .lyr file and reset the data sources.
5. **After a line has been created, changing the value of LTYPE does not change the values of associated attributes.** This is unfortunate. If you wish to change the LTYPE (or other key value) of an already-attributed line, you must also change the value of each dependent attribute.



*Line templates in
ContactsAndFaults24K.lyr*

Translate single-attribute lines to multiple-attribute lines with script AttributeByKeyValues

To translate existing single-attribute lines to multi-attribute lines, use the AttributeByKeyValues script in the NCGMP09 toolbox available at the NGMDB project website. The current version of the At-

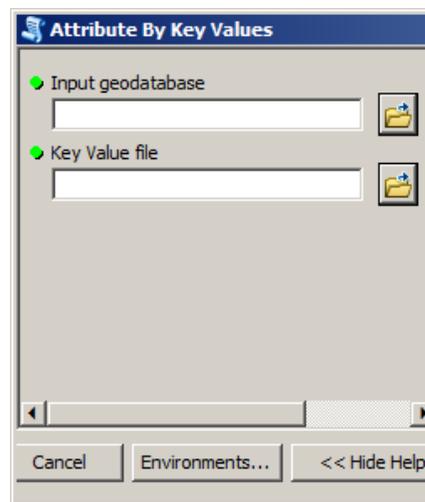
tributeByKeyValues script only works on feature classes within the GeologicMap feature dataset. The current version of the script will not overwrite existing (non-null, non-blank, non-0) values.

The script works with a user-provided key value file; an example file with format instructions is provided with the toolbox. The key value file is a simple text file that specifies one or more feature classes and, within each feature class, a list of attributes (fields). The key, or independent, field is given first, followed by dependent fields. The list-of-fields line is followed by lines that identify a value for the key field and specify the corresponding values for the dependent fields. The lines

```
ContactsAndFaults
LTYPE |Type |LocationConfidenceMeters|ExistenceConfidence| IdentityConfidence
contact      |contact|20 |certain| certain
contact dashed|contact|100|certain|certain
```

translate to

```
in feature class ContactsAndFaults,
    if LTYPE == contact:
        Type = contact
        LocationConfidenceMeters = 20
        ExistenceConfidence = certain
        IdentityConfidence = certain
    elif LTYPE == contact dashed:
        Type = contact
        LocationConfidenceMeters = 100
        ExistenceConfidence = certain
        IdentityConfidence = certain
```



The key value file can be extended to set IsConcealed, Symbol, and any other attribute. A possible work flow using this script is:

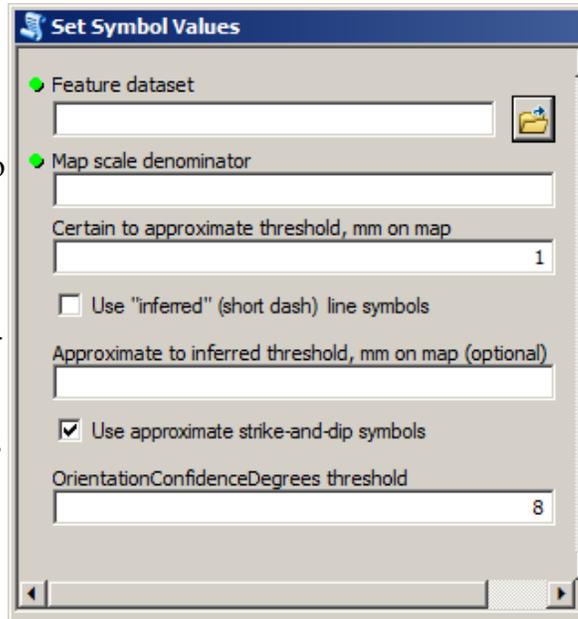
1. Create an empty NCGMP09-style geodatabase using the Create New Database script. Check the box to add LTYPE, PTTYPER, and PTYPE attributes.
2. In ArcCatalog, or the Catalog window of ArcMap, right-click on the ContactsAndFaults feature class and **Load** existing single-attribute data. The Simple Data Loader will ask you to match source fields with target fields. Match the source master line attribute with LTYPE. Do NOT match any fields with Type, LocationConfidenceMeters or other fields that you intend to set with the AttributeByKeyValues script. Don't load an empty field into ContactsAndFaults_ID.
3. Scan the resulting attribute table to ascertain the values of LTYPE, or use the Frequency tool (**Arc-Toolbox > Analysis Tools > Statistics > Frequency**) to create a table of LTYPE values. Write or modify a key-value file to specify these LTYPE values and the appropriate values for dependent fields.
4. Run the AttributeByKeyValues script.
5. Scan the ContactsAndFaults attribute table to ascertain that the all values of LTYPE were mapped to NCGMP09 fields. If not, edit the key value file and re-run the script.

See below for some strategies for obtaining values of LocationConfidenceMeters.

Set line symbols

Script SetSymbolValues takes a feature dataset, map scale, and threshold values as input and calculates Symbol for some values of Type. Use this script to avoid thumbing through the FGDC symbolization standard; also to re-set symbols when you change map scale.

For the script to work there must be *a priori* knowledge of Type values, yet in order to provide desirable flexibility the NCGMP09 schema does not prescribe such values. This information is provided in file `Type-FgdcSymbol.txt` which is located in the Scripts subdirectory of the NCGMP09 toolbox directory. The Type values in this file are taken from the FGDC symbolization standard. If you choose to use a different Type value for, e.g., *rotational or scissor fault, reverse-slip offset*, edit the appropriate line of `Type-FgdcSymbol.txt`, inserting your Type value for this concept.



Choosing NCGMP09 ContactsAndFaults attribute values

Here are some strategies for choosing values of the NCGMP09 line attributes.

Type values are generally easy to choose. Contact, fault, thrust fault, low-angle normal fault, gradational contact, map boundary, neatline, boundary of glacier or permanent snowfield: the universe of likely values is not large. You are free to make up your own values. All values of Type must be defined in the Glossary table within the geodatabase.

Some scripts that operate on ContactsAndFaults parse Type values into 3 classes: contacts, faults, and map boundary. If your fault Types all have 'fault' in them, and the map boundary Type contains 'map' and 'boundary', there should not be a problem.

IsConcealed is either Y or N.

LocationConfidenceMeters can be challenging. We can start with United States National Map Accuracy Standards (<http://nationalmap.gov/standards/nmas647.html>):

Horizontal accuracy. For maps on publication scales larger than 1:20,000, not more than 10 percent of the points tested shall be in error by more than 1/30 inch, measured on the publication scale; for maps on publication scales of 1:20,000 or smaller, 1/50 inch. These limits of accuracy shall apply in all cases to positions of well-defined points only. Well-defined points are those that are easily visible or recoverable on the ground, such as the following: monuments or markers, such as bench marks, property boundary monuments; intersections of roads, railroads, etc.; corners of large buildings or structures (or center points of small buildings); etc. In general what is well defined will be determined by what is plottable on the scale of the map within 1/100 inch. Thus while the intersection of two road or property lines meeting at right angles would come within a sensible interpretation, identification of the intersection of such lines meeting at an acute angle would obviously not be practicable within 1/100 inch. Similarly, features not identifiable upon the ground within close limits are not to be considered as test points within the limits quoted, even though their positions may be scaled closely upon the map. In this class would come timber lines, soil boundaries, etc.

This suggests that for 1:24,000 scale and larger maps, well-defined features (which geologic contacts

may not be!) are located within +/- 0.02 inches. At 1:24,000 scale, this is **±12 m on the ground**. **If lines are originally located on 1:24,000 topographic maps, they cannot be more accurate (have smaller LocationConfidenceMeters values) than this.**

A 1956 memo from USGS Chief Geologist W.H. Bradley suggests that accurately located ('certain') features are “located from exposures or other evidence within 1/25 inch [on the map] of their true map position” (quoted in FGDC-STD-013-2006, p. 18). At 1:24,000 scale, this is **±24 m on the ground** and at 1:100,000 scale, ±100 m on the ground. There have been significant departures from this suggestion because of the cost of drafting dashed lines, the unreadability of maps with abundant dashed lines, and the recognition that accuracy criteria relevant to the well-exposed desert Southwest are not useful in heavily timbered, drift- or loess-covered terrain elsewhere. The resulting confusion is one of the reasons for converting to an explicit LocationConfidenceMeters attribute.

What values of LocationConfidenceMeters should you use? If you are translating an existing dataset, appropriate values may be identified in the accompanying metadata. If not, ask the geologist who created the dataset what values are appropriate. Or guess at appropriate values, using Bradley's ±1 mm (±1/25 inch) rule, and ask the geologist to confirm them. If the geologist is not available, use your best judgment. **In all cases, graphic depiction of LocationConfidenceMeters values (see above) will be helpful in evaluating your choices.**

Even with a factor-of-two uncertainty, author-assigned values of LocationConfidenceMeters are preferable to an unreported value or a value assigned by a third party.

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Map boundaries are part of the ContactsAndFaults feature class, as they participate in the map topology, but they usually do not correspond to locatable real-world features. Set their LocationConfidenceMeters to 0.

ExistenceConfidence and **IdentityConfidence** are not distinguished on most existing maps. Contacts and faults are simply queried. Your best choice for ascertaining whether a line is queried because ExCon is questionable, IdCon is questionable, or both is to interrogate the geologist responsible for the map. Most geologic maps have few queried lines, thus the amount of work occasioned by interrogating the geologist and individually setting ExCon and IdCon values <> 'certain' will be small.

If there is no responsible geologist to interrogate, use your judgment. You could decide that all queried lines have ExistenceConfidence = questionable, unqueried lines have ExistenceConfidence = certain, and set IdentityConfidence = unspecified for all lines. Please explain what you did in the appropriate entry in DataSources (see below). You could also provide an explanation in the formal metadata for the feature class (or report as a whole).

The **DataSourceID** field intentionally has great flexibility. At one extreme, an entire map could have one DataSources entry, e.g., “This report. Contacts, faults, and map units were established in the field, from remote sensing data, and by inference, as well as from previously-published reports and oral and written communications from colleagues. Field work and compilation were done by the authors, assistants, and several colleagues over the last two decades.” Not very informative, but formally correct.

At the other extreme, you could create a separate DataSources entry for every combination of photo pair, field traverse, and bout of compilation and interpretation. This is probably too much detail for most database users!

Where you transcribe an existing map (published or manuscript) and assign LocationConfidenceMe-

ters, ExistenceConfidence, and (or) IdentityConfidence values, this should be noted in the DataSourcees entry, e.g., “Doe, J., circa 1960, Geologic map of the Somewhere Quadrangle, unpublished USGS manuscript, scale 1:24,000. Digitally transcribed in 2014 by I.M.A. Geek who, with great trepidation, assigned values of LocationConfidenceMeters, ExistenceConfidence, and IdentityConfidence.” If the map was already published and the author was available and helped assign confidence values, say so.

You truly don't know what the confidence values should be. The NCGMP09 schema suggests that in cases where confidences are truly unknown, ExistenceConfidence and IdentityConfidence may be set to “unspecified”. LocationConfidenceMeters may be set to -9 to indicate an absence of information. If this is a new map—i.e., the authors are available but did not help—the reviewers should crucify the authors for this.

You are too important to bother with multi-attribute lines. Stuff “contact, approximate, queried” and similar values into the Type field, with appropriate definitions in the Glossary table. Set LocationConfidenceMeters to -9, ExCon and IdCon to “unspecified”, and use an arbitrary value for IsConcealed. Set all DataSourceIDs to 'DAS1' (= 'This report'). This will be a valid NCGMP09-style database. The reviewers should object. Your colleagues and your dog will shun you.

Factoring existing multi-attribute values into new NCGMP09 attributes

If you have a feature class, shapefile, or coverage with multi-attribute lines that you wish to translate into the NCGMP09 schema, first answer these questions:

- Do existing attributes encode the same information as the NCGMP09 attributes? If so, and existing attributes are identical, except for field names, with NCGMP09 attributes, simply Load the existing data into the ContactsAndFaults feature class, ensuring that fields are mapped properly
- If existing attributes encode additional information beyond the NCGMP09 attributes, is the additional information best encoded as added fields in the ContactsAndFaults feature class, as an added table to be joined to ContactsAndFaults, or in the ExtendedAttributes table?

If existing attributes encode the same information but existing and NCGMP09 attributes are not equivalent, I suggest:

1. Create a new, empty ContactsAndFaults feature class. You may do this as part of creating an empty new geodatabase with the CreateDatabase script.
2. Add fields for the existing line attributes to the ContactsAndFaults feature class. You can do this from the Catalog window: double-click on the feature class, go to the **Fields** tab, scroll down to the bottom of the list, and add new entries. Or from the ArcMap Table of Contents (when not editing): open the ContactsAndFaults attribute table, click the dropdown ▼ arrow next to the table icon in the upper left of the window, select **Add Field....**, fill out the Add Field window, ensuring that Data Type and Field Properties match the existing attribute, **OK**, and repeat as needed.
3. In the Catalog window, right-click the amended ContactsAndFaults feature class, select **Load > Load Data....** and proceed. Ensure that fields are mapped correctly. **Finish**. Or use the Append tool (**ArcToolbox > Data Management Tools > General > Append**)
4. At this point you can either use the Field Calculator to translate existing attributes to NCGMP09 attributes, or write a short script that creates an update cursor and, with it, recalculates field val-

ues and updates each feature.

If existing attributes encode information beyond the NCGMP09 attributes, see the brief discussion *Encoding additional information* in the NCGMP09 schema documentation, p. 144. Procedures for mapping a multi-attribute dataset to multiple tables are beyond the scope of this document.

If existing attributes fail to capture some of the NCGMP09 attribute information, see *Choosing NCGMP09 ContactsAndFaults attribute values*, above.

The NCGMP09 line attributes

ContactsAndFaults attributes in NCGMP09 were chosen to provide robust line descriptions, build on the analysis of map lines contained in “FGDC Digital Cartographic Standard for Geologic Map Symbolization”, and facilitate reuse of map data. Required line attributes include:

- **Type** *contact, fault, waterline, thrust fault, glacier boundary, map boundary, etc.* Values must be defined in Glossary
- **IsConcealed** *Y or N*
- **LocationConfidenceMeters** floating point number. Half-width in meters of positional uncertainty envelope
- **ExistenceConfidence** *certain, questionable, unspecified.* Values must be defined in Glossary
- **IdentityConfidence** *certain, questionable, unspecified.* Values must be defined in Glossary
- **DataSourceID.** foreign key to DataSources table

The three confidence attributes and *DataSourceID* are feature-level metadata. The draft NCGMP09 specification, version 1.1 (on pages 98-100) has an extensive discussion of such feature-level metadata.

Lines also have a *ContactsAndFaults_ID* attribute, which is a primary key for this feature class. Note that values for all *_IDs* must be unique within a given geodatabase. Lines also have *Symbol*, *Label*, and *Notes* attributes, though these fields may be empty. If Cartographic Representations are used to symbolize this feature class, *RuleID* and *Override* fields must be present.

LocationConfidenceMeters is a floating-point number because it is a real-world quantity, not because we know values to within a gnat's eyelash.

Values commonly will not be known precisely. This is acceptable. Even with a factor-of-two uncertainty, author-assigned values of LocationConfidenceMeters are preferable to an unreported value or a value assigned by a third party. The positions of certain lines (for example, map boundaries) commonly are calculated, not observed; for these lines, positional uncertainty has little meaning and LocationConfidenceMeters should be assigned a value of 0.0.

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Symbol is not the same as *Type*. The distinction allows easy re-symbolization of a map for different purposes, e.g., editing versus publication.

Some geologic maps characterize contacts and faults as either *certain*, *approximately-located*, or *inferred*. Taken at face value, this three-fold distinction conflates how-located with how-well-located. The distinction obscures the fact that some inferred (not observed) contacts are very well located, whereas other observed contacts are—because of dense brush, poor GPS reception, bad base map, or other factors—not well located at all.

While drafting the NCGMP09 standard we discussed the possibility of including a *HowLocated* field in ContactsAndFaults that reported how lines were identified and located: on-the-ground eyeballs, remote sensing, geophysics, petrography, etc. We decided this was a bad idea, as (1) users of our maps are primarily concerned with the content of our maps, not how the maps were made, (2) such information can be conveyed by thoughtful use of the DataSourceID attribute, and (3) the distinction between on-the-ground observation and remote sensing (or geophysics, or ...) is unfortunate. It reflects a lack of appreciation of how obvious and well-located some features are with appropriate 'remote' observation methods and how poorly 'direct' observation allows us to locate and characterize some features.

Why change?

Paper maps are compromises founded on the limitations of the medium. Only so much information can be packed into a given space on the paper map. We simplify our knowledge of the map so that this knowledge can be portrayed on the map sheet and stored in the library.

With the advent of digital databases for storing map information, the space-related compromises of our analog past are no longer necessary. We can make maps that are as rich as we wish them to be. A richer set of line attributes allows us to:

- Communicate better. We unpack the multiple dimensions hidden inside single-attribute lines and explicitly describe each dimension. We move away from esoteric jargon (*certain*, *approximate*) and use real-world units (*meters*) that are widely understood.
- Better re-use data at other scales. Traditional definitions of line accuracy (*certain*, *approximate*) are scale-dependent. When we label a line *approximate* we don't specify how much the scale must shrink before the line becomes *certain*. With real-world values for LocationConfidenceMeters we confidently and correctly assign symbology (continuous or dashed) at any scale.
- Facilitate queries. Determination of relative map-unit ages and identification of an unconformity do not depend on whether a contact is approximate or certain. All concealed lines should be dropped to build polygons. For a first-cut seismic hazard evaluation it may be appropriate to ask where the nearest fault is. In each of these instances there is a corresponding digital query. With single-attribute lines, these queries often involve complex analysis of text strings and it is easy to code mistakes. Multiple-attribute lines allow simpler query logic that is more likely to be correct.

Note that the transition from paper to digital media does not change the fundamental character of our maps as abstractions of the real world! Storing more details makes our maps richer but does not make them more real. This is OK: geologic maps work *because* they are abstractions.

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