Chapter 2. Cartographic Standards

2.1 Introduction

To facilitate use, exchange and integration of its products, the PDS follows accepted planetary cartographic standards for data products where they exist. Because such standards evolve as new data and knowledge are acquired, there are advisory groups charged with developing and periodically updating standards for coordinate systems. All data providers for PDS products should follow accepted standards and be aware of current NASA and international recommendations on cartographic coordinate systems and conventions relevant to their bodies of interest. ***An absolute requirement for all PDS products is that relevant coordinate systems and frames be clearly specified in product labels and supporting documents.*** This chapter specifies, as of late 2008, the authoritative sources for international cartographic standards, provides a summary of major cartographic elements to which those standards apply, and identifies the primary standards that PDS has adopted.

2.1.1 International and NASA Advisory Groups for Cartographic Standards

The primary international body for coordinate systems in the Solar System is the International Astronomical Union (IAU). The IAU has recognized the International Celestial Reference System (ICRS) as the defining inertial reference system and its associated International Celestial Reference Frame (ICRF) (Ma et al., 1998) as the defining frame for that system. The ICRS and ICRF are maintained for the IAU by the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service (IERS, http://www.iers.org/).

For cartographic coordinates and conventions for planets and satellites, the IAU and the International Association of Geodesy (IAG) have established jointly the Working Group on Cartographic Coordinates and Rotational Elements (WGCCRE), which publishes triennial reports, currently in the journal *Celestial Mechanics and Dynamical Astronomy* (Davies, et al., 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1992, 1996; Seidelmann, et al., 2002, 2005, 2007). This working group includes PDS-affiliated scientists, thus assuring full interaction in defining the standards. Publications and reports issued by the WGCCRE can be found at http://astrogeology.usgs.gov/Projects/WGCCRE/. PDS data providers should refer to these reports for current information and recommendations on rotational elements for Solar System bodies and how these are related to their cartographic coordinates.

The NASA Lunar Geodesy and Cartography Working Group and the Mars Geodesy and Cartography Working Group are sponsored by the NASA Lunar Precursor Robotics Program (LPRP) and Mars Program offices, respectively, and are responsible within NASA for providing additional coordination of cartographic standards and related (e.g., data processing) issues (Archinal et al., 2008a, 2008b; Duxbury et al., 2002). These Working Groups have made additional recommendations regarding coordinate systems (generally with additional detail) beyond those of the WGCCRE.

2.2 Inertial Reference Frame and Time System

The orientation of a body in the Solar System can be calculated using a series of rotation angles to define the directions of the body's principal axes with respect to an inertial reference frame (i.e., a system that is not rotating or accelerating relative to a specific reference point) which provides a standard frame from which position, velocity, and acceleration can be measured. Such a reference frame is a set of identifiable fiducial points and their positions on the sky, providing a practical realization of a reference system that defines the origin, fundamental planes (or axes), and transformations between observed elements and reference points in the celestial coordinate system. Reference coordinate systems are defined by a system of concepts (e.g., using planetocentric latitude and longitude) while a reference coordinate frame is a specific realization of a coordinate system that is anchored to real data (such as a photogrammetric control network, altimetry crossover solutions, or lunar ephemerides) (Kovalevsky and Mueller, 1981).

For a planetary body in space, position is defined relative to a Z axis (typically the spin vector of the body, or the planetographic north pole), the X axis (defined as the point where the equator of the body crosses the equatorial plane of an inertial frame at a specific epoch), and the Y axis of a right-handed system. The standard units for coordinates are based on the International System of Units (SI), including decimal degrees. The orientation of Solar System bodies can be calculated from angular position (right ascension α and declination δ) with respect to the equatorial system of a particular epoch. For example, the orientation of the north pole of a body at a given epoch is specified by its right ascension α and declination δ, while the location of the prime meridian is specified by the angle W (Davies et al., 1980).

The standard epoch is called J2000.0 and is defined to be 2000 January 1.5 TDB, where TDB is Barycentric Dynamical Time (e.g., Seidelmann et al., 2007). This corresponds to 2000 January 1, 1200 hours TT (Terrestrial Time) or the Julian Date 2451545.0 (NAO, USNO and HMNAO, 1983). This also corresponds to 2000 January 1, 11:58:55.816 UTC (Coordinated Universal Time; Seidelmann et al., 1992). Although the natural system for many applications would be TDB, UTC is considered the fundamental system for all PDS data products. The standard way of expressing UTC is in year, month, day, hour, minute, and decimal seconds. Julian Dates (JD) are supported as a supplementary system for reporting UTC time. However the JD time scale must be specified (e.g., UTC or TDB). See the Planetary Science Data Dictionary (PDS, 2008), chapter 2, for further information on time representation.

The currently accepted orientation of the inertial system (i.e., J2000.0 right ascension and declination) is defined by the International Celestial Reference System (ICRS), which is a particular implementation of the Barycentric Celestial Reference System (BCRS) (IAU, 2000). The ICRS is the fundamental celestial reference system of the IAU, and it has an origin at the barycenter of the Solar System and 'space fixed' (kinematically non-rotating) axis directions. As noted by the IAU, the ICRS is meant to represent the most appropriate coordinate system for expressing reference data on the positions and motions of celestial objects. Specifications for the ICRS include a metric tensor, a prescribed method for establishing and maintaining axis directions, a list of benchmark objects with precise coordinates, and standard algorithms to transform these coordinates into observable quantities for any location and time. The ICRS is derived from the International Celestial Reference Frame (ICRF) comprised of coordinates for a set of fiducial points on the sky. The ICRF is within 0.05 arcseconds (Chapront et al., 2002; Herring et al., 2002) of the Solar System inertial frame based on Earth's Mean Equator (EME) at the Equinox of Julian Ephemeris Date (JD) 2451545.0 (i.e., J2000.0). This is consistent with current dynamical practice and spacecraft and planetary ephemerides (e.g., those provided by the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory).

Many older data sets, collected before the J2000.0 system and ICRF were defined, are referenced to EME and Equinox of Besselian 1950.0 (B1950.0; JD 2433282.423). While this reference frame should not be used for current data, PDS supports this reference frame for older data. Transformation between the "B1950.0" and "J2000.0" (and the nearly equivalent ICRF) systems has been well defined by the IAU (NAO, USNO and HMSNAO, 1983; also see http://nedwww.ipac.caltech.edu/forms/calculator.html).

Positions may be expressed in other coordinate systems and associated frames, which can be derived from the fundamental system and frame, when this enhances the use of the data for various applications. These include ecliptic-based coordinates and heliographic coordinates. These coordinates, while possibly "natural" for many applications, are derivable from the fundamental system and are therefore treated as supplementary data by PDS. In some cases, it is convenient to work in one preferred coordinate system and then to convert to another, more standard system for products. This practice of providing the natural working coordinates in addition to the coordinates in a fundamental system promotes ease of use of PDS products and should be adopted by all data providers who use coordinate systems other than the fundamental system. As noted above, all supplementary coordinate systems must be fully documented in PDS products and must be negotiated with the PDS prior to delivery.

2.3 Spin Axes and Prime Meridians

The spin axis orientations of many Solar System bodies are defined by the WGCCRE in the ICRF inertial reference frame. For historical reasons, the orientation of the spin axis of planets and satellites is defined by the "north" pole, which is the pole that is on the northern side of the Invariant Plane of the Solar System (close to but not the same as the ecliptic). With this definition of the north pole, it is also necessary to specify whether the rotation is direct or 'prograde' (in the same direction as the Sun's rotation or counterclockwise when viewed from above the north pole) or retrograde (opposite to the direction of the Sun's rotation).

For small bodies such as comets and asteroids, for which precession due to torques can cause large changes in the angular momentum vector, the orientation is defined by the 'positive' pole, which is the pole determined by the right hand rule for rotation. Since some small bodies can be in excited state rotation, there are numerous complications in application that are addressed in more detail in the WGCCRE reports. Depending on the mode of excited state rotation, the axis may coincide with the maximum moment of inertia. Some cases, particularly the case of chaotic rotation, are considered on a case by case basis by the WGCCRE.

If a body has a solid surface, prime meridians for a given longitude system may be defined by specifying the coordinates of a surface feature on the body (usually a small feature such as a crater in the equatorial region) or by the mean direction relative to the parent body for synchronously rotating bodies (e.g., the Moon, the Galilean moons, and most of the Saturnian moons). Where insufficient observations exist to determine the principal moment of inertia, coordinates of a surface feature will be specified and used to define the prime meridian. In the case of planets without solid surfaces, the definition of the prime meridian is somewhat arbitrary. In any case, the actual definitions are decided by the WGCCRE, not by the PDS. We note that influxes of new data often lead to an iterative process to define (or improve) the orientation of the spin axis or other parameters used to define a coordinate system and in these cases the data providers (e.g., spacecraft mission personnel) and the WGCCRE must maintain close contact regarding the definition.

2.4 Body-Fixed Planetary Coordinate Systems

Two types of coordinate systems are fixed to the body – planetocentric and planetographic. Details of the coordinate systems for planets and satellites differ from those for small bodies and rings. This section discusses only the aspects that are common to all applications. The ***Planetocentric*** system has an origin at the center of mass of the body. Planetocentric coordinates are defined by a vector from the center of mass of the body (often approximated as the center of figure) to the point of interest, typically but not necessarily a point on the surface (e.g., an impact crater with known position). The planetocentric latitude is the angle between the equatorial plane and the vector, while the planetocentric longitude is the angle between the prime meridian and the projection of the vector onto the equatorial plane.

The ***Planetographic*** system also has an origin at the center of mass of the body. Planetographic coordinates, however, are defined by vectors perpendicular to a reference surface, often a biaxial ellipsoid that is centered on the body and chosen to describe the gross shape of the body. Reference surfaces vary from body to body and are defined by the WGCCRE in consultation with the observers who provide the information to define such surfaces. The most common reference surface is an oblate spheroid aligned with the spin axis of the body. However, for certain applications the reference surface may be a triaxial ellipsoid, a gravitational equipotential, or a higher order surface model.

For a biaxial ellipsoid the planetographic latitude is the angle between the equatorial plane and a vector through the point of interest, where the vector is normal to the reference surface. Planetographic longitude is the angle between the prime meridian and the projection of the same vector onto the equatorial plane. In general, the planetographic vector does not pass through the origin. The vector need not pass through the spin axis but in most realistic cases it does. If the reference surface is a sphere, the planetographic and planetocentric vectors are identical.

The WGCCRE allows for the use of either planetographic or planetocentric coordinates for a given body, so data providers may adopt either system. Historically planetographic coordinates have been preferred for cartographic products, while planetocentric coordinates were used for dynamical (i.e. orbit, gravity field, altimetric) observations and calculations. For the planet Mercury, the MESSENGER mission has chosen to use planetocentric coordinates as the primary coordinate system for all products (Seidelmann et al., 2007). For the planet Mars, the MGCWG and all current NASA missions have chosen to use planetocentric coordinates as the primary coordinate system for products (Duxbury et al., 2002). Producers of printed or electronically printed maps (e.g., in PDF format) may wish to show both types of coordinates.

2.4.1 Planets and Satellites

For planets and satellites, the conventions are complicated for historical reasons. In the planetocentric coordinate system, northern latitudes are those in the hemisphere of the body containing the spin pole that points to the northern side of the invariant plane of the Solar System. The body's rotation direction, either prograde or retrograde, must also be specified. Planetocentric longitude increases eastward (i.e., in the direction defined by the right-hand rule and the "north" pole) from the prime meridian, from 0° to 360°. Thus an external observer sees the longitude decreasing with time if the rotation is prograde but increasing with time if the rotation is retrograde.

North and south planetographic latitude are defined in the same way as for planetocentric latitude, although the numerical values for a given point on the surface, (other than on the equator or at the poles) are different if the reference surface is not a sphere. The definition of planetographic longitude is dependent upon the rotation direction of the body, with the basic definition being that an external observer should see the longitude increasing with time, or that the longitude increases in the direction opposite to the rotation, although there are exceptions due to historical practice for Earth, the Moon, and Sun. That is to say, the longitude increases to the west if the rotation is prograde (or eastward) and vice versa. Whether the rotation direction is prograde or retrograde can be determined from the current WGCCRE report. See Tables 1 and 2 (or their equivalent in any future report), where the sign of the velocity term for W indicates either prograde (positive) or retrograde (negative) rotation. For all bodies a longitude range of 0° to 360° can be used.

For Earth, the Moon, and the Sun, a longitude range of -180° to +180° has been used in the past [including in existing PDS data sets, as defined by the *Planetary Science Data Dictionary* (PDS, 2002)] and is allowed by the WGCCRE. However, for the Moon, the NASA LGCWG and LRO Mission recommend that in the future, only the 0° to 360° range be used (LGCWG, 2008; LRO Project, 2008). For printed or electronically printed maps (e.g., in PDF format), it may be useful to label the longitude grid both with primary 0° to 360° coordinates and -180° to +180° coordinates.

For the Moon, two slightly different reference systems are commonly used to orient the lunar body-fixed coordinate system. One is the Mean Earth/Polar Axis (ME) system, the preferred system to be used for PDS data products. The other is the axis of figure system, also called the Principal Axis (PA) system, sometimes used internally among instrument teams for specific applications. For computing precise lunar coordinates, the WGCCRE recommends the use of the JPL DE403 ephemeris (which provides lunar orientation in the PA system), rotated into the ME system. The WGCCRE noted in its most recent report that improved versions of the JPL ephemerides were imminent and might be used instead. In fact the JPL DE421 ephemeris is now available and, after rotation into the ME system, is recommended for use (LGCWG, 2008; LRO Project, 2008). The maximum difference between these two frames in the ME system for the period 2000-2019 is only about 6 meters (Archinal, 2008).

2.4.2 Small Bodies

For small bodies (asteroids and comets), both planetographic and planetocentric coordinates follow the same right hand rule that is used to define the positive pole, which can be either above or below the invariant plane of the Solar System. For the simple case of a body with positive pole pointing to the northern hemisphere of the Solar System, this corresponds to longitude, both planetocentric and planetographic, increasing eastward, 0° to 360°, which in turn corresponds to the case in which the longitude seen by an outside observer decreases with time.

For some small bodies, coordinates based on latitude and longitude alone can be multi-valued in radius — i.e., the vector from the center of the body can intersect the surface in more than one place. There may also be complications (due to the irregular shape) which force special procedures when producing a useful, planar map. Such details are discussed in reports of the WGCCRE.

2.4.3 Rings

There is no international standard for ring coordinate systems. Standards in use for such PDS products were defined by experts in the Rings Node, in consultation with a broad cross-section of interested scientists. Conventions for coordinate systems for rings are similar to those for small bodies, in as much as they are all based on a right-hand rule, with longitude increasing in the direction of orbital motion. Thus longitude increases eastward for the prograde-moving rings (Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune), but it increases westward for retrograde-moving rings of Uranus. Rings also use a positive pole direction following the right hand rule, analogous to the case for small-body rotation, thus coinciding with the North Pole of Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune, but the South Pole of Uranus.

Coordinates for rings differ from those for planets and small bodies in not being body-fixed because there are no fixed features to define longitude. They are defined in an inertial system that is co-moving with the center of mass of the parent body. Specifically, longitudes are measured from the ascending node of the plane of the rings in the ICRF, i.e. the point at which the plane of the rings intersects the ICRF equator. In the case of inclined rings, longitudes are measured as a “broken angle” from the ascending node of the planet’s equatorial plane in the ICRF, along the equatorial plane to the ring plane’s ascending node, and thereafter along the ring plane.

2.4.4 Planetary Plasma Interactions

There are no international standards for values or names of coordinate systems of planetary plasma observations. Recommendations for coordinate systems in the near-Earth environment by Russell (1971) have been generalized for use with plasma observations at other bodies. More recently, other systems have been defined (e.g., Franz and Harper, 2002) and are currently in use. The coordinate systems used for plasma observations and data analysis typically are right-handed. The primary exception to this rule is the left-handed Jovian System III.

Standards for planetary plasma data products for PDS were defined by experts in the Planetary Plasma Interactions Node, following recommendations from Russell (1971) and Franz and Harper (2002) and in consultation with other specialists. Providers and users of PDS data featuring plasma observations are encouraged to use names as defined by these authors where appropriate, and to follow similar name construction when new systems must be defined.

2.5 Surface Models

A standard reference surface model commonly used for hard surfaces is the digital terrain model (DTM). The DTM defines body radius or geometric height above the body reference surface as a function of cartographic latitude and longitude. Spheroids, ellipsoids and harmonic expansions giving analytic expressions for radius as a function of cartographic coordinates are all allowed in PDS. A DTM may also define potential height, i.e., “elevation”, above an equipotential surface, *provided* the method is specified, including the specification of appropriate constants and gravity field that is used to convert to/from radii and potential height.

The only internationally recognized DTM is the MOLA model for Mars (Seidelmann, et al., 2007, page 168 in WGCCRE #10). DTMs are also available for other bodies, including the Moon and several small bodies; but their use is not officially recommended and therefore up to the individual user.

The digital image model (DIM) defines body brightness in a specified spectral band or bands as a function of cartographic latitude and longitude. A DIM may be associated with the surface radius, geometric height, or potential height values in a corresponding DTM or it may be registered independently to a spheroid, ellipsoid, or spherical harmonic expansion.

2.6 PDS Keywords for Cartographic Coordinates

To support the descriptions of these various reference coordinate systems and frames, the PDS has defined the following set of ‘geometry’ data elements [see the *Planetary Science Data Dictionary* (PDS, 2008) for complete definitions and additional data elements].

A_AXIS_RADIUS
B_AXIS_RADIUS
C_AXIS_RADIUS
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_CENTER_NAME
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_DESC
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_ID
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_NAME
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_REF_EPOCH
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_TYPE
EASTERNMOST_LONGITUDE
LATITUDE
LONGITUDE
MAXIMUM_LATITUDE
MAXIMUM_LONGITUDE
MINIMUM_LATITUDE
MINIMUM_LONGITUDE
POSITIVE_LONGITUDE_DIRECTION

WESTERNMOST_LONGITUDE

To support the description of locations in a planetary ring system, the PDS has defined the following data elements:

CENTER_RING_RADIUS
RING_RADIUS
MINIMUM_RING_RADIUS
MAXIMUM_RING_RADIUS

RING_LONGITUDE
MINIMUM_RING_LONGITUDE
MAXIMUM_RING_LONGITUDE

B1950_RING_LONGITUDE
MINIMUM_B1950_RING_LONGITUDE
MAXIMUM_B1950_RING_LONGITUDE

RING_EVENT_TIME
RING_EVENT_START_TIME
RING_EVENT_STOP_TIME

RADIAL_RESOLUTION
MINIMUM_RADIAL_RESOLUTION
MAXIMUM_RADIAL_RESOLUTION

The radius and longitude elements define an inertial location in the rings, and the ring event time elements define the time at the ring plane to which an observation refers. If desired, the radial resolution elements can be used to specify the radial dimensions of ring features that can be resolved in the data. See the Planetary Science Data Dictionary (PSDD; PDS, 2008) for complete definitions of these elements.

Some rings are not circular and/or equatorial. In these cases, the PSDD provides additional elements that can be used to describe a ring's shape. The elements are:

RING_SEMIMAJOR_AXIS
RING_ECCENTRICITY
RING_PERICENTER_LONGITUDE
PERICENTER_PRECESSION_RATE
RING_INCLINATION
RING_ASCENDING_NODE_LONGITUDE
NODAL_REGRESSION_RATE
REFERENCE_TIME

Here the value of REFERENCE_TIME indicates the instant at which the LONGITUDE elements are defined. The actual pericenter and ascending node at the time of an observation are determined based on the precession and regression rates as follows:

pericenter_longitude = RING_PERICENTER_LONGITUDE +
PERICENTER_PRECESSION_RATE *
(observation_time - REFERENCE_TIME) mod 360
ascending_node_longitude =
RING_ASCENDING_NODE_LONGITUDE +
NODAL_REGRESSION_RATE *
(observation_time - REFERENCE_TIME) mod 360

The oscillating modes of a ring can also be specified if necessary:

RING_RADIAL_MODE
RING_RADIAL_MODE_AMPLITUDE
RING_RADIAL_MODE_FREQUENCY
RING_RADIAL_MODE_PHASE

Additional elements should be used to specify the assumed orientation of the planet's pole:

POLE_RIGHT_ASCENSION
POLE_DECLINATION
COORDINATE_SYSTEM_ID

The COORDINATE_SYSTEM_ID can be either "J2000.0" or "B1950.0", with "J2000.0" serving as the default. See the PSDD for further details.

2.7 Map Resolution

A uniform set of resolutions is helpful for analyses of multiple datasets and development of map products derived from PDS data, and the selected scale must account for differences in available image resolution and quality. Such map scales are measured against a reference surface that is typically a geometrically defined shape that represents a given planetary body. For global maps, the recommended spatial resolution for a map is 2^n pixels per degree of latitude, where a pixel is treated as a finite area and n is an integer. A spatial resolution of 2^n pixels per degree allows simple coregistration of multiple datasets by doubling or halving the pixel sizes (typically by averaging or interpolation) and without resampling or otherwise changing the pixels. These recommendations continue a convention established in the 1960s and 1970s by the lunar and Mars research communities (e.g., Batson, 1987; Greeley and Batson, 1990), as advocated by the NASA Planetary Cartography Working Group (PCWG) and its successor the Planetary Cartography and Geologic Mapping Working Group (PCGMWG) (PCWG, 1993, pp. 22-24), and affirmed by the LGCWG (2008).

For polar regions of global maps, the recommendation is also to use the binary map scale or 2^n pixels per degree of latitude near the pole. This practice maintains consistency with the global data product.

For working at landing site scales with data that has pixels of tens of centimeters to a few meters in size, spatial resolutions of maps are more convenient if provided at scales of 1 meter per pixel resolution or multiples thereof (LGCWG, 2008). At such human scales this convention is simpler and will preserve inherent details of resolution for applications such as landing site operations, traversing, and surface engineering studies.

For both global and local maps showing elevation or relief, the recommended vertical resolution is 1 x 10^m meters, where *m* is an integer chosen to preserve all the resolution inherent in the data.

2.8 References

(Note: All WGCCRE reports are listed below for completeness. WGCCRE Report 7 was not issued).

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