Abstract.
Various ideas of data have emerged, expressed in practice through distinct vocabularies of data-related terms. This article develops a six-category taxonomy of these vocabularies, and illustrates how their terms are utilized in texts which relate to geographic information systems (GIS) in general, and to the HYDRA5water catchment modeling system developed for the Sydney Water Corporation in particular. Revealed is complex cross-referencing between inter-related vocabularies. Terms from different vocabularies are juxtaposed in such a way as to produce a cascade of meaningful reference which invites the reader to accept the transitions from understanding 'data' in one way to understanding it in another. Several implications are drawn out briefly: problems with viewing data as 'object'; the need to explore further how the complexity of data is negotiated in practice; and the defining role that ideas of data have in relation to communities of practice, professional education and technical training.