

UTK Data and GIS Users Discussion Forum
November 8, 2001, Hodges Library
Summary of Discussion

The meeting began shortly after noon in 150 Hodges Library with sixteen attendees:

UT Libraries: Eleanor Read, Moderator (Hodges), Jane Row (Hodges), Janette Prescod (Hodges), Thura Mack (Hodges), Teresa Berry (Hodges/Map), Sandy Leach (Ag/VetMed), Margaret Mellinger (Ag/VetMed)

Faculty: Bruce Ralston (Geography), Shih-Lung Shaw (Geography), Joanne Logan (Biosystems Engineering and Environmental Science), Rachel Chen (Consumer and Industry Services Management)

OIT: Ann Reed (Statistical Consulting Center)

CBER: Betty Vickers (State Data Center)

Graduate Students: Kendrick Curtis (Geography), Dave Ralston (Geography), Amy Page (Sociology)

Ellie Read opened the discussion by welcoming the attendees and explaining why the library wants to periodically gather together data and GIS users and other interested parties for an informal discussion. We want to hear from data users about the data they are using, problems they encounter in the process, and what services the library or other UTK organizations could/should provide. Similarly, we want to know about GIS activities on campus, who is providing support, and what the needs are in terms of both data and support.

We then went around the room for introductions.

Ellie Read made several announcements before turning the discussion over to the group. She...

Explained that the Social Science Data Services Librarian position is relatively new, and was created in order to advance data services in the library. Her goal is not just to increase collections of and access to data, but to raise awareness of our resources and services within the UTK research community. She offered the Data Services Policy handout and showed the new data services web page available from the Libraries' website (www.lib.utk.edu/refs/data).

Announced that the Libraries have just begun the search process for a new Map/Geography Librarian to replace Jim Minton, who retired in May. We will be looking for someone with GIS knowledge and experience in the hopes of eventually being able to offer (or contribute to) some kind of centralized GIS support at UTK. What shape this service takes will depend on what other organizations on campus are doing, the skills and knowledge of the new Map/Geography Librarian, space availability, resources for equipment and software, etc.

Showed the new *Information for Social Scientists* newsletter that was distributed to faculty and some graduate students in all social science departments, schools, and colleges in October. Compiled by the Social Science Group of the Reference and Instructional Services team, the newsletter highlights resources and services that are new or noteworthy. Offered copies for those who didn't receive one and suggested those outside the social science organizations who are interested in getting this newsletter to give their name to Jane Row.

Explained the new ICPSR Direct service that allows researchers on campus to download ICPSR* data and documentation files directly from the ICPSR website without having to go through the Data Services Librarian. Showed the information page available from the data services web page and briefly

explained the process of registering and ordering. (*Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research)

Bruce Ralston, Head of the Geography Department, announced that GIS Day at UT will be held on Friday, November 16, 2:00-4:00 p.m. in the University Center Crest Room. In addition to exhibitors such as GIS service providers (on campus and off), the Knoxville Police Crime Analysis Unit, and the Tennessee Electronic Atlas Project, there will be films on GIS, virtual flights through ORNL, internet mapping sites, and various software demos. It is free.

He also demonstrated two new web-based applications for extracting census summary file data and mapping Tennessee data. The first application extracts tables from the Census SF1 file. With just a few keystrokes and mouse clicks you can create a dbf or comma-delimited text file to use in a mapping project. Bruce indicated that he is willing to share this program with anyone affiliated with UTK. Ellie suggested putting information about the program on the data services web page to give it some visibility.

The other application involves the Tennessee Electronic Atlas (TEA). On the TEA web page (http://tntlas.geog.utk.edu/tea/inter_map.htm), there is an interactive mapping program embedded in a web viewer which will allow the user to classify by different layers and variables, as well as bring up tabular and hotlinked data. Also provides an extract tool which will create downloadable shape files to be used with a GIS program on the client machine.

Jane Row asked about the status of the centralized GIS support proposal put forth by Bob Muenchen, Manager of the Statistical Consulting Center (SCC), earlier this year. Ann Reed, also with the SCC, said that budget constraints have kept it from going forward.

Jane Row asked how often non-geography students go to the Geography lab or department looking for assistance with GIS projects. This occurs quite often, with individual students, as well as whole classes of students. The Geography faculty and lab assistants provide assistance on a limited basis.

More UTK programs are offering their own introductory GIS classes, but there still is a real need for support for students who can't take a semester-long class to learn what they need to know to do a GIS project. For a quick start and self-paced learning, Joanne Logan recommended the ESRI Virtual Campus tutorials (<http://campus.esri.com/>). With our site license, all faculty, staff, and students have free access to the online modules. Upon request, Joanne Logan or Betsy Lillie, UTK's site administrator for ESRI products, will provide the code needed to access the modules. We discussed the possibility of having the Libraries coordinate one or more workshops where students could work through the online courses on their own, but there would be a person knowledgeable in GIS on hand to answer questions. Perhaps this could be done in the Info Lab. Jane and Ellie will follow up on this.

Joanne mentioned an upcoming ESRI workshop that will be held at Roane State Community College and will be open to the public. It is still in the planning stages. When the time comes, perhaps the Libraries can help get the word out on campus so students, faculty, and staff can participate.

There was some discussion about the new ArcView 8.1, which is completely different from ArcView 3.2, and has a much steeper learning curve. Shih-Lung Shaw will be teaching a class in 8.1 in the spring semester.

USGS is no longer providing DLGs, DEMs, etc. to libraries through GPO, and they charge for access via their website. DOQQs, DLGs, and DRGs for the state of Tennessee are available from the Tennessee Spatial Data Server (<http://63.148.169.50/>).

The next meeting will be held sometime in the spring 2002 semester.