

Summary of Discussion
UTK Data and GIS Users Discussion Forum
November 10, 2004

The meeting began shortly after noon in 150 Hodges Library with 15 attendees:

UT Libraries: Eleanor Read, Moderator (Hodges), Travis Dolence (Map), Jane Row (Hodges), Janette Prescod (Hodges), Eric Arnold (Map)

Faculty: Ben Bates (Journalism/Electronic Media), Gene Fitzhugh (Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies), Joanne Logan (BEES)

Graduate Students: Nancy Brannon (Sociology), Maulin Herring (Sociology), Ornuma Thongniramol (Sociology)

OIT/Statistical Consulting Center: Bob Muenchen, Ann Reed

SWORPS: Linda Broyles, Cathy Irwin

Ellie Read opened the discussion by welcoming the attendees and explaining why the library periodically gathers together data and GIS users, support staff, and other interested parties for an informal discussion. This is a time for us to talk about needs, concerns, questions, services, and resources, with regard to secondary data and/or GIS research at UT.

We went around the room for introductions.

Ellie Read made several announcements:

- SPSS 12.0, SAS 9.1, and ArcMap 9 are on the GovSSRI machine in the Documents and Microforms room (across from ER's office). SPSS 12.0 also is on the GovStandards machine in DocMic. These are available for use by UT faculty, staff, and students.
- Three well-attended data-related workshops were conducted during fall semester: Accessing Data from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Data Archive, Accessing Census Data Using American FactFinder, and Accessing Census Data Files from ICPSR. Workshops planned for spring semester are ICPSR and the General Social Survey. The ICPSR workshop will now be offered during fall, spring, and summer terms every year. Suggestions for new workshops or repeats of previous workshops are always welcome.
- Ellie gave a brief report on the results of the Data Services Awareness and Use Survey that she conducted last fall. The survey was conducted to help us learn more about secondary data users at UT, and to assess the level of awareness of Data Services and the effectiveness of our various promotion and outreach activities. The response rate was a respectable 26%, and the data and comments have proved to be useful and informative. Of note is the fact that 44% of the respondents said they were aware of Data Services. On the surface, and with no previous baseline to compare it to, this sounds pretty good. However, it is only half of the respondents who said they are/were data users. There is clearly still a need for continuing promotion and outreach to let faculty, staff, and students know that there is help of this kind available from the Libraries. Some activities implemented this fall in response to the survey results were providing three data-related workshops this semester instead of one, and using a network of department secretaries in social science departments to help distribute appropriate introductory and announcement e-mail messages to graduate students.

Travis Dolence, the Libraries' Map/GIS Librarian, made a few announcements and generated some discussion about GIS support on campus:

- He passed out a handout on future planning of GIS services at the UT Libraries. Anticipated activities include a literature review of articles written about GIS use in academic libraries; a review of GIS services provided by libraries at peer institutions; an updated review of GIS services currently available at the UT campus; a survey to ascertain who is and is not using GIS at UT, and how the Libraries may be able to help provide GIS services to the growing numbers of interested students who are not in traditional GIS subject areas; forming a working group of various Libraries personnel and prominent faculty GIS experts to help in planning GIS services; and preparing a report with the results of these activities, including suggestions, costs, and a timetable for implementing proposed recommendations. The handout included a draft of the survey. Travis invited participants to send comments to him about the plan and the survey. If you are interested in seeing and commenting on these documents, please contact Travis Dolence at tdolence@utk.edu or 974-3878.
- Travis did a quick review of the GIS@UT website and showed some new data/maps that the Map Library has acquired.
- The GIS for the Absolute Beginner workshop conducted last month was a big success in terms of interest and attendance. The workshop was a very basic introduction to concepts and terminology.
- There was discussion about how to follow up and provide support to novice GIS users who aren't in traditional GIS departments. How do we provide technical assistance for the software? How do we fund additional hardware such as large-scale scanners and printers and other peripherals needed for comprehensive GIS work? A collective partnership is a possible solution. This discussion will continue.

Bob Muenchen, Manager of the Statistical Consulting Center, demonstrated the new Citrix server that provides access to 20 (soon to be 21) research software packages that are not available at UT through a site license. It's fast and easy to use, and works just like the software is on your own computer. There are some limitations: only 20 users may log on to the server at one time, and only two to seven people may use a package simultaneously (number depends on the package). So far, these simultaneous user limits have not caused a problem. Software support from the Statistical Consulting Center ranges from no support to full support, depending on the package. For more information on how to use the new server or a list of the software available, please go to <http://oit.utk.edu/scc/HowToUseAnalysis.utk.edu.pdf>.

Joanne Logan brought up the subject of GIS Day at UT. In past years we have had an open house with displays and demonstrations for users of GIS in the East Tennessee Region. Participants included faculty, staff, students, researchers, and non-UT organizations such as the Knoxville Metropolitan Planning Commission. An event has not been planned for this year (next week is national GIS Day). A suggestion was made to postpone UT's GIS Day until spring semester, and perhaps try to incorporate an environmental theme to coincide with our campus-wide Environmental Semester. This idea was well-received by the group. Stay tuned!

Bruce Ralston, Head of the Geography Department, was not able to attend due to a conflict with a class. He would like to share this information, though, regarding new Census TIGER files and his new TIGER translator program. From his e-mail:

- The Census Bureau will distribute TIGER 2004, Version 1 starting next month. (There will be a Version 2 release in mid 2005.) The main difference between this version and TIGER 2003 is the existence of a new metadata feature type. That is, for every line in a TIGER file there will be

a set of fields that indicate the sources for that line. This is feature level metadata. A single line may have no metadata record, one metadata record, or many metadata records. Right now the metadata records contain codes. I assume there will be a lookup table released that indicate what the codes mean. I know some values point to National Hydrography Data as a source for water lines, for example.

- I have a new version of the tiger translator that I developed that will work with this version of TIGER (or any version back to TIGER 94). It has been tested by the Census Bureau. If you would like a copy, just drop me an email. It's free. [Bruce's e-mail address is bralston@utk.edu]

We will meet again next fall, or possibly in the spring if there is interest.

EJR 11/12/04