

UTK Data and GIS Users Discussion Forum  
November 12, 2002, Hodges Library  
Summary of Discussion

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

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

Faculty: Bruce Ralston (Geography), Shih-Lung Shaw (Geography), Marlys Staudt (Social Work), Kendra Albright (Information Sciences)

OIT: Bob Muenchen (Statistical Consulting Center)

CBER: Betty Vickers (State Data Center)

Graduate Students: Aaron Routhe (Sociology), Avery Ashby (Statistics/SCC)

Other: Charlie Orme (High School Student)

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...

Briefly explained her role as Social Science Data Services Librarian, and her desire to raise awareness about our data resources and services within the UTK research community. She offered the Data Services Policy and ICPSR handouts, as well as the two *Information for Social Scientists* newsletters.

Reported that the Libraries are continuing the search for a new Map/Geography Librarian to replace Jim Minton. 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.

Reminded folks that they have access to 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. (\*Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research)

Announced that SPSS 10.0 (soon to be 11.0) is on the GovDoc\_13 machine in the documents room, and that ArcMap 8.1 is on that machine and several others.

And finally, polled the group and determined that e-mail was the best way to invite participants to future brown-bags.

Bob Muenchen, Manager of the Statistical Consulting Center, announced that SCC now provides walk-in statistical and computing support, manned by two graduate students in Statistics. The schedule changes each semester, and is posted on their website (<http://oit.utk.edu/scc/schedule.html>). He noted that the justification for getting the resources for this service came, in part, from feedback he got at our first data/GIS brown-bag in February 2001.

He also announced that he is creating a listserv that will replace the Statistical Newsletter that he has sent out each semester in the past. The list will begin in January. He passed around a sign-up sheet for those interested in participating.

He then announced that UT will soon have Text Miner (from SAS), which will enable researchers to conduct analyses of textual content. Apparently this is a vast improvement over two other text analysis packages that have been available (Nudist and TextSmart from SPSS).

Lastly, Bob mentioned that both SAS and SPSS have new procedures to handle analyses of complex sample survey data (e.g., take random sample of high schools, then random samples of the students in those high schools). The SAS products are called SurveyReg and SurveyMeans. The SPSS product will be available in SPSS 12.

Bruce Ralston, Head of the Geography Department, announced that UT would not have GIS Day at UT this year. He also announced that Intergraph, a computer mapping company, is giving UT all of their GIS products for free. He just received Version 5. He asked if it was possible to have this administered at a more central level, and Bob Muenchen said he will see if OIT's Software Distribution group would handle it. Bruce also showed the census mapper program available from the Tennessee Electronic Atlas webpage.

Jane Row asked if it would be worthwhile to have ESRI come to campus to do some kind of introductory workshop on using GIS software. Shih-Lung Shaw said it was very expensive. Discussion ensued as to whether it would be better instead, to have a symposium/seminar/workshop explaining how GIS can be used in different fields, particularly the social sciences. Aaron Routhe, a doctoral student in Sociology, seemed to think that researchers in the social sciences don't realize that GIS could be applied in many ways within their disciplines. Bruce Ralston said he would help with an event like this, and Jane and Ellie agreed to take the lead on investigating the possibility of doing this in spring semester. Ideas included having people from MPC and the Knoxville Police Department talk about how they apply GIS in their work. Dr. Shaw also added that a session focused on a specific data resource such as the Census might be worthwhile.

We discussed the support available (or not) on campus for students and faculty wishing to use GIS in their research. The Geography, Planning, and some Agriculture departments offer their own GIS courses, but there is no central support for people not in those programs, or who cannot or do not want to take a full semester course. The library may be able to help with this, depending on who is hired to be the Map/GIS Librarian. Bob Muenchen mentioned that he is still trying to convince upper management to consider his proposal for centralized GIS and mathematical computing support.

Ellie Read announced that she was contemplating doing a workshop or seminar showing researchers how to access General Social Survey data and documentation files, and how to use them. She is hoping for a team presentation with one or more researchers sharing how they have used the GSS in their research, followed by the mechanics of obtaining the data and documentation. Bob Muenchen said he knew some people who might be interested in participating.

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

EJR 11/27/02