

UTK Data and GIS Users Discussion Forum
November 17, 2003
Summary of Discussion

The meeting began shortly after noon in 150 Hodges Library with 20 attendees:

UT Libraries: Eleanor Read, Moderator (Hodges), Travis Dolence (Map), Jane Row (Hodges), Janette Prescod (Hodges), Eric Arnold (Map), Sandy Leach (Ag/Vet Med)

Faculty: Bruce Ralston (Geography), Kendra Albright (Information Sciences), Mark Harmon (Journalism/Electronic Media), Tim Prather (BEES), Hoan Bui (Sociology)

Graduate Students: Dima Sarbo (Sociology), Donna Cherry (Social Work)

OIT: Bob Muenchen (Statistical Consulting Center), Chris Hodge (SunSITE)

CTAS: Mike Meyers, Kim Raia

Research Centers: Wolf Naegeli (EERC), Beth Collier (Community Health Research Group), Brandon League (JIEE)

Ellie Read opened the discussion by welcoming the attendees and explaining why the library wants to periodically gather 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, etc.

We went around the room for introductions.

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

- SPSS 11.0 is on the GovSSRI machine in the documents room (across from ER's office), as is ArcMap 8.1 is on that machine and several others. We are in the process of getting a license to add SAS 9.0 to that machine.

- She is planning to do 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. The 2002 GSS data is now available from ICPSR (study number 3728).

- We were successful in finding a new Map/Geography Librarian to replace Jim Minton. Travis Dolence came in January of this year and has been busy working with the map library and organizing resources for GIS users. She then turned it over to Travis.

Travis introduced himself and talked a bit about what he has been doing at the Map Library. He feels that it is underused and is trying to raise awareness within the university community. He said that they are moving more and more to digital resources, and are working on preservation issues. Travis showed the new GIS@UT website, which is rich with information about GIS

resources, courses, facilities, researchers, websites, data, etc. Lastly, he announced that the Map Library now has three GPS units that may be checked out for a seven-day period.

Bob Muenchen, Manager of the Statistical Consulting Center, made several announcements:

- The license fees for a number of software packages are now being covered by the Student Technology Fee. The only cost is \$5 for the CD(s) needed to install the program(s). Popular statistical packages such as SAS, SPSS, JMP, and S-Plus are included. Programs such as ESRI, Maple, and Clementine are also covered, but may only be installed on UT computers. OIT is working on a system to provide electronic downloads of software packages; they hope it will be ready for spring semester.

- SPSS 12 is now in distribution. It has all new graphics architecture, and will now allow variable names up to 64 characters, a vast improvement over the former limit of 8 characters.

- SAS Text Miner is going well. It looks for concepts in the text in Word, WordPerfect, PDF, HTML, and other documents, and clusters documents with similar patterns. In response to a question from Mark Harmon, Bob said that Text Miner is different from Nudist and other text analysis packages, but it's not necessarily better. The main difference is that it uses an automated process to identify concepts. It essentially does a factor analysis with words to find words that co-occur. It only takes an hour or two to learn the basics and get some initial results from Text Miner. Call Bob at 974-5230 if you would like to see a demo.

- OIT is trying to get funding for a server for rarely used research software packages (i.e., only five or so users per package). A Citrix server would house the software, which authorized users could access to perform their analyses. The server would allow 20 simultaneous users, but no more than two users at a time for any one package. This software sharing would provide access to researchers at little additional cost to UT. Usage would be monitored and, if demand warranted, additional "slots" could be added.

Bruce Ralston, Head of the Geography Department, announced that the GIS Day at UT Open House would be held on Wednesday, November 19, 2003, 3:00-4:30 p.m., in the Ballroom at the University Center.

Wolf Naegeli mentioned that the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) has acquired some very high quality topographical maps from the National Geographic. These reside on a Sunsite server and may be used by researchers who are working on relevant projects.

Tim Prather mentioned that a group of 40-50 people recently gathered for the first Agriculture GIS Interest Group meeting. Over the next few months, they will showcase various projects using GIS. Participation is not limited to people on the agriculture campus. If you are interested in participating in the next meeting or would like more information, please contact Tim Prather at tprather@utk.edu.

The next meeting of the Data and GIS Users Discussion Forum will be held sometime in the spring 2004 semester.

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