Geography 150 Online (Class #12158, GE Section D, Social Sciences)
Spring 2009 Semester
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Special Assignment #1:

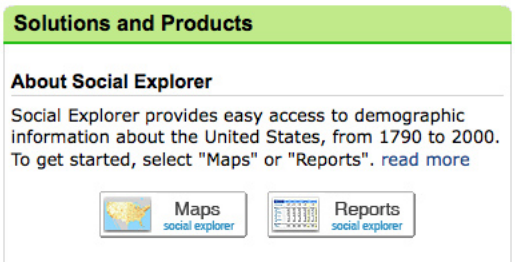
Create a Map Online Using the Social Explorer

10 Points • Due 2/23 at 10:00am

Introduction

Maps are a fundamental form of communication, especially for geographers. The advent of desktop computing has brought with it the ability of users to easily combine real world data with statistical/tabular information. Collectively, these software applications are referred to as Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

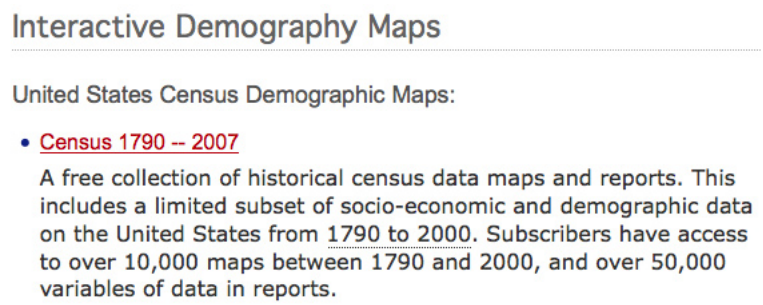
For the first special assignment in this class I will ask that you create a map and legend online using the Social Explorer website. This online tool features a GIS-like mapping interface and provides convenient access to current and historic demographic information about the United States. We will be using the free public version to create a basic map and corresponding legend.



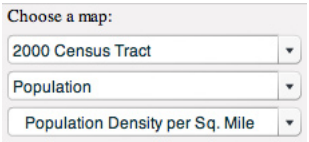
From the Social Explorer homepage, click the 'Maps' link. From the following page click the 'Census 1790-2007' link to launch the mapping application.

Create a Map

Begin by accessing the Social Explorer website at www.socialexplorer.com. Next, click on the '**Maps**' link listed under 'Solutions and Products'. From the next page click on the '**Census 1790-2007**' link to launch the online mapping application. Note that this application is based on Adobe's® Flash technology, so you will need to have the latest version of the Adobe® Flash Player installed on your computer. If needed, access the Adobe® website to download and install the free player.



Once loaded, you will see a choropleth map of the United States. There are three drop-down menus under the 'Choose a map' heading in the upper-right hand corner of the map interface. From here you can choose the dataset (such as Census Tract 2000), category (such as Income) and specific attribute (such as Median Family Income) you wish to map. Across the top of the map interface you

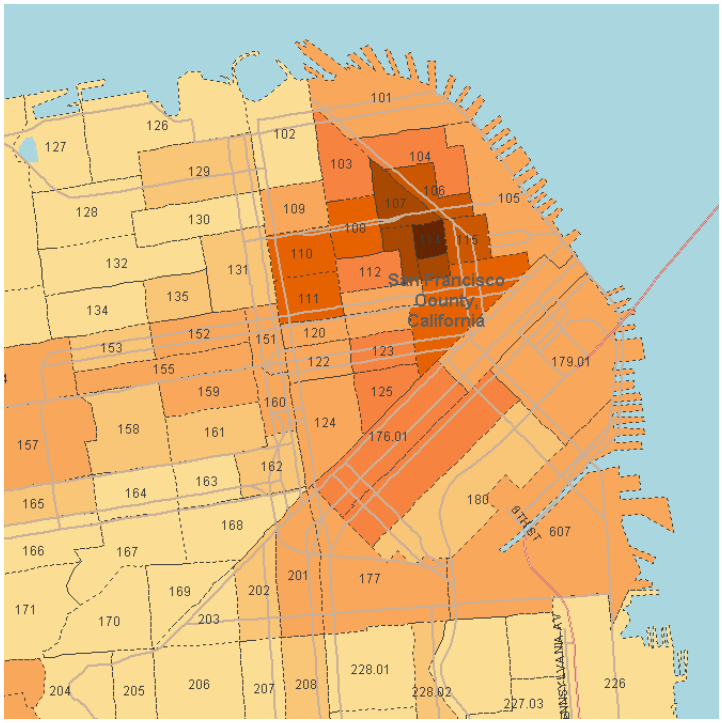


Use these three drop-down menus to choose your dataset, general category and specific attribute to map.

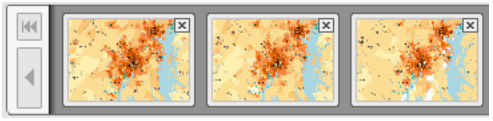
The toolbar at the top of the map interface allows you to zoom, pan, and print. You can also reset by clicking the 'initial view' button.

will see some basic controls that will allow you to zoom, pan and print your map.

Your task is to create one or more maps using this online interface. **The variable and coverage area for your map are totally up to you**. You can make a map of the entire United States or one covering just your local neighborhood. Regardless, spend some time exploring the various datasets and attribute categories that are available. Note that for the '**Census Tract**' datasets, the data will be displayed by county until you zoom into the regional level and beyond (that is, **changing the scale of the map**).



A sample map depicting the percentage of Asian population by census tract in the northeastern section of San Francisco. Clearly visible is the Asian population in and around Chinatown.



Use the 'slideshow' function at the bottom of the mapping interface to save a series of images.

Save Map & Legend as Images

Once you have crafted a map that you are happy with, simply click the '**Print**' button at the top of the map interface; this will open your map and its corresponding legend as static images in a new window. Next, right-click (or control-click on the Mac) and save both images to your local hard drive (Save Image/Target As...).

Create a Basic Layout

Finish this assignment by arranging the map and legend images into a Microsoft® Word document. Neatness counts, so make sure you produce something you would be proud to submit. Enhance your map layout by adding a title and a brief text explanation describing the coverage area and variables used to create the map. Also include a sentence or two of basic analysis: What does this map tell you? Can you detect any spatial patterns? What did you learn from making this map?

For you adventurous types out there, try creating a layout with more than a single map image. For example, you could create one primary map and a smaller inset map of greater detail (i.e. state level for your primary map and county-level for your inset).You might also consider making a series of maps that show change over time. At the bottom of the map interface you have the ability to save a series of map images (referred to as a 'slideshow' in the map interface). Setup your coverage area and attribute as normal, then change the dataset mapped (i.e. census tract datasets for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000) and save each version to the slideshow strip. Save your images as described above and then compile them into a multi-page Word document.

Submit

Once you have completed your map layout, save the Word document and title it with your last name (i.e. deis.doc). Turn this Word document into me via the Submit module on the WebCT homepage for this class. **DO NOT EMAIL YOUR WORD DOCUMENT TO ME. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO SUBMIT YOUR DIGITAL FILE**. Once the availability period has ended you will no longer be able to submit your file. I will not accept late assignments, nor are there any makeup options if you fail to submit this assignment prior to the deadline.