Adapting Library GIS Services in the Age of COVID-19: Challenges, Changes, & Planning for the Future

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Overview of Core UT Libraries (UTL) GIS Services

Prior to March 2020, all GIS services were offered and developed on campus. No prior experience working from home.

Geospatial Research LibGuides
https://guides.lib.utexas.edu/gis/home

Texas GeoData Portal
https://geodata.lib.utexas.edu

Research Consultations

GIS workshops & events
COVID Impacts on Normal Library Operations

- Sudden COVID impact on campus procedures: 3/16/2020 - present
- Main library hours reduced, most branch libraries closed
- Libraries staff in Scholarly Communications working almost exclusively from home
Geospatial Research Consultations

Almost all pre-COVID consultations were in-person

All consultations during pandemic now via Zoom

Greater flexibility for early/late consultations

Virtual consults allow out-of-area collaborators to attend

New, more efficient scheduling process via GIS LibGuide

Virtual consultations to continue in Spring 2020. Unknown what format patrons will prefer post-COVID
Geospatial Research Consultations

Consultation numbers have increased year over year

Questions in current consultations very similar to those pre-COVID

Software installation and access questions not as frequent as initially feared at start of remote learning

UTL provides geospatial software access through VMs

LibGuides provide detailed GIS software installation instructions
Texas GIS Day

2020 marks the second year that UT has organized GIS Day events

GIS Day 2019 = all on campus events, GIS Day 2020 = all virtual

This year UT collaborated with other GIS Day organizers across Texas

Texas GIS Day unlikely to have happened if 2020 was a normal year

Already starting to discuss Texas GIS Day 2021
Collaboration and Community Building

Previous pre-COVID attempts at in-person community building saw momentum falter

- Campus visits
- Conference events

Virtual GIS “Birds of a Feather” session in June, TDL GIS Interest Group formed in July

Many accomplishments within the span of just 6 months

- Group charter, 2 webinars, 4 standing subcommittees, 20+ members from 8+ institutions

Monthly meetings, multiple events, a survey, & data collaboration planned for 2021
Planning for New Scholars Lab

- Implementation group formed in early March 2020 after funding for design & construction approved
- Envisioned as a space that could support GIS services (workshops, consultations, Data Lab, etc.)
- Funding on “indefinite hold” as of May 2020 due to COVID budget impacts, but interest is undiminished
- What should a post-COVID lab space look like? What geospatial services should be offered?

Planning to hopefully resume soon, once funding is no longer frozen
Pre-COVID all of our Data & Donuts workshops were in person

Our 6 Spring 2020 semester workshops finished week before lock down

Fall 2020 workshops were all virtual via Zoom

Workshops designed to highlight UT COVID research and Texas Data Repository

Four workshops scheduled 12 – 1pm on alternating Fridays

Zoom webinar licensing was a little complicated, but webinar format was great
Geospatial Research Workshops

Spring 2020 workshops will continue to be virtual Zoom webinars

Duration will be increased from 1 to 1.5 hours based on feedback

Post-COVID workshops likely to be a mix of virtual and in-person events
The Texas GeoData Portal

New datasets continue to be added to our Texas GeoData portal

Use of the portal has continued to increase

Collaborative project to add research data to the portal currently in planning stages
Assessment

Importance of assessment underscored when working from home

New scripted automated assessment methods developed during pandemic:

- Reference email tracking
- Consultation tracking via analysis of Zoom statistics
- GeoData portal contributions and usage statistics
Assessment

Fall 2020 Data & Donut workshop series sources of assessment data

Statistics from Zoom registration page

Survey distributed to all workshop registrants after last workshop of the semester
Questions or Comments?

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Links

- UT Libraries Data & Donuts workshop series
- UT Libraries GIS Services LibGuide
- Texas Digital Library (TDL) GIS Interest Group
- Texas GeoData portal