Session III: Friday, May 19th: 10:15-11:15am

Location: Salon B

Session Title: **Tools to make census data processing more efficient**

Organizer: April Urban

Primary Notetaker: Leah Hendey

Attendees:

Naomi Cytron, Noah Urban, Nancy Jones, Jef Waltman, Geoff Smith, Christina DeGiulio,

Camille Seabury, Katie Zager, Amanda Davis, Randy Rosso, April Urban, Mike Schramm, Laura McKieran; Sara Hintze, Joe Baldwin

April - We’ve come across some tools that vendors are selling to visualize data - are there ways to leverage these tools -that are available for a fee? can we use them to make federal data processing more efficient? [My Sidewalk](http://app.mysidewalk.com/) is a tool out of Kansas City, [Policy Map](https://www.policymap.com/) is another web map tool - [ESRI's Community Analyst](http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/community-analyst) tool. Given they are already processing the data, is there a way to leverage?

Randy - FRAC - use census data all the time. Used some tools.

Amanda Davis - use On the Map a lot.

Katie Zager- UNCC - ACS - -arc gis -user ,and download the raw data and do a map in 20 minutes. Download geodatabases.

Can’t republish Community Analyst data.

Camille Seaberry - use ACS and On The Map a lot - most of our stuff is focused on neighborhoods within New Haven.. Always using custom geographies. Stuff that I build myself. Wrote my first R package - getting ACS data into neighborhood profiles. Gitfhu

[Ct-data-haven](https://github.com/CT-Data-Haven) - on github - [ACS profiles - R packag](https://github.com/CT-Data-Haven/acsprofiles)e. -tried to document. Automated everything - using the API. Census APIs crash a lot.

Randy Morris - use census data constantly. Some of our folks just went to the ACS Users conference.

Christiana DeGiulio: very interested in GitHUB link - been working with a consultant- trying to bring data work in-house. We use business analyst from ESRI. [Social explorer](http://www.socialexplorer.com/)- census data form back to 1790 - will aggregate data for you. PolicyMap - interested in the widgets.

Joe Baldwin - API- want to be able to automate more.

Sara Hintze- use the [R ACS library](https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/acs/acs.pdf) - to automate a good chunk of downloads. Not yet there. The scripts are easy. Happy to share any of the work that has been done. We’ve have a demo of my-sidewalk but didn’t fit our needs. Internally we weren’t satisfied with the output you get. Missing data sets - they provide correlations- not everyone understands what that means, might get the wrong impression if it wasn't explained. Use Community Analyst as well.

Geoff Smith - curious about other tools people use.

Jef Waltman - is there utility - in application that central database and something could contribute use cases to and do queries. I have experience in enterprise management, data integration. Technically-consulting firm - my idea is for the community good.

Nancy Jones- want to make better use of Census API tools. Don’t understand paying for free data. Would like to have all my ACS data processed by third week of December. Pulled through API and thought it was cumbersome.

Noah - think about this in 2 ways - get a lot of community requests - use [Census Reporter](https://censusreporter.org/) tool (free, open source, - better version of factfinder -visualize) Experimenting to fork the code for that to tie into our data portal. The other is the IT team has been working the a lot more with ETL tool in [Pentaho](http://www.pentaho.com/).

Naomi Cytron - automation conversations blows my mind. I’m pulling census tables and mapping, Try to think about on a systems level to do this in a systematic way. Direct people to Policy Map.

Leah: For DC, we download raw summary tabulations and process them in SAS. We have saved code.

The Data Center - uses the Census API -they presented in the February Idea Showcase <http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/get-involved/webinars/nnip-idea-showcase-network-update-february-2016>

April - could import a shapefile - custom geography - to Community Analyst. How to do this for our users? Are they something worth investing in? Having it?

Joe - there is a document on business analyst- a lot of voodoo involved. You have to go to it - time is of the essence. Interesting.

Randy M- black box for ESRI- not sure about their methodologies.

Mike - i refer to april.

Nancy - ours neighborhoods are all census tract based.

April - what is your value vs. national tools? How do you community that? Compare prices? It’s free.

Noah - one of our clients - has a Policy Map subscription. But they still want’ to talk about the data and trust our opinions..

Sara - trying to work on locally generated population and housing estimates.

Christina- people in Atlanta call ARC right way. We’ve gotten a joint license for things with other organizations..With Policy Map we would partner and share a license. Only 5 of us in the group - -maybe we can partner with the chamber to all get access to it.

Joe - USDA - puts something out on food deserts - there was an error in the denominators - needs to make the smell test. We can figure out those things. We impose artificial boundaries on a neighborhood.

Camille- we have neighborhoods defined by the city - the neighborhood I just moved out of - included a stretch of apartments are mostly Yale students, but that has no interaction with the neighborhood.

Joe - in St. pete - council of neighborhood associations.

April - tool people could do it .

Nancy - 278 neighborhoods - don’t align with statistical boundaries. - but communities needs to use them for grant applications etc. We have 55 neighborhoods for research and policy context.

Joe - critically important to have community involvement. They could identify zip code. Physical place not just about people.

Randy R - Something on the nnip website about this.

Leah - careful about splitting tracts. If data is tract-based - and we give the option to create their own boundaries we have to re-weight things - may be more distorting than helpful? MAPC had created a tool that allowed custom aggregation: see [ignite session from Cleveland-](http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/activities/meetings/ignite-showcase-september-2016-part-iii) website still in Beta? <http://www.knowplace.us/>

April - how do we meet every need?

Katie -force people into a block group based geography - can roll up from there. We have different templates- can highlight - city council 1. Boundaries aren’t perfect by any means,. People have an easier time understanding the limitations than to explain the weighting. Simpler the better.

Randy M- anyone asymmetrical aggregating the housing counts to weight the population? We handle the entire population forecast for Oregon. Have a good housing layer. Will share the results.

April - partnering with Policy Map or ESRI - to make more data available with a partner? Vs. from scratch?

Nancy -we thoughts about doing Policy Map instead of GeoLoom - but we chose not to (would have to ask why).

Noah- TRF -was involved in Detroit before but had not well-named typologies. Trying to figure out about putting name and brand behind fuzzy ACS.

Christina - still evaluating whether we will go down the road with Policy Map- we do a lot of dashboards in tableau. Policymap seemed more intuitive. Pricing info - cost, custom widget. We aren’t the greatest about structuring maintenance -who will pay in year. What can we reasonably do.

April - contracted developer to do web development. Database development to user experience and design. For a tool, what are others doing?

Nancy - I like New Orleans tools. Data explore.

Katie - i think API doesn’t work for custom geography.

Sara - if you use something like the R library. Can pull by the table.

Camille - [acs.r](https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/acs/acs.pdf) someone from MIT wrote it. I wrote some convenience functions on top of that. There is also a package called [census API](https://github.com/hrecht/censusapi)- i use for QCEW calls so i don’t have to write the API calls.

Joe - geodata base packages.

Jef - do you have to pull fresh API ?

Sara- these are the tables that the we are going to use the most. So we are saving the script for next year.

Katie - a lot of efficiencies- margins of errors.

Camille's- ACS package will handle MOEs for aggregating 5 census block groups.

Sara - doing things in house vs. contract. Not been at MARC that long - been there long enough to hear complaints- stay within javascript and html - when php are updated have to go back to contractor. Then the cost is higher. Brought me and another person in.

Nancy - when we get big money we might contract out - but on other - projects- 4 person shop- rewriting own code over again. We have Carlos working on it. We’ve paid for work that we have to redo consistently.

Mike- in a university or low budget setting -hard to keep a high quality application developer.

Jef - from the perspective of someone who is responsible -. the maintainability of code in software development lifecycle is an issue no matter what. Need to be intentional. Has to be actively managed. Plenty of big companies struggle with this. Be prudent about architectural design.

Sara - the code for america people - seem willing to assist on how much you should pay, what you are looking for?

Jef - LA code for america person (Vyki Englert)-was willing to do that.

Weave 2.0 is out - not as flash-based.

Tech committee?- Randy Morris- would be interested in helping organize. Would want to organize resources. some kind of a response team.

NNIP HQ will look into adding partner profiles - github

Links to send around: Tech and Tools section:

<http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/data-tech/tools/acsr-r-package-neighborhood-level-data-us-census>

<http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/data-tech/tools/standard-process-inquiries-about-promoting-products-services-nnip>

<http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/library/catalog/nnip-website-data-portal-catalog-january-2016>