Session 3: Thursday 10/23/2015, 2:45-3:45pm

Location: Pegasus #2

Session Title: Data Systems 101

Organizer: April Urban

Primary Notetaker: Katya A

Participants: Lisa Pittman, Liza Morehead, Audrey Spiegel, Brian Karfunkel, Zach Szczepaniak, April Urban, Natalie Young, Michael Schramm

April: Giving a tour of neocando.case.edu and the Neighborhood Stabilization Team web application on the projector/computer

Mike: We do have an older property level web app but the access has been limited to that one because they have chosen to bar the data from the general public because of the provider’s security concerns. A part of the NST web app has been used by CDCs for code enforcement, referring people to the right services that can help them. They’re entering information in. Another thing about the NST is that Case can restrict what parcels you see in each geography, but we can’t control which columns you see. We don’t have the human resources to finish our build out on that.

Lisa: What Community Profiles were you working on?

April: We did do the Community Profiles for another partner, but it’s unclear whether we will have ownership over that data. It will be accessible by API so hopefully it’ll feed into NEOCANDO.

Brian: Demonstrating the Furman Center’s Data Search tool. Done on a SQL backend.

Mike: We’re licensing the NST framework to Memphis, would be happy to talk about it to NYC.

Brian: Working on the fourth iteration of the data search tool now, but don’t have a SQL programmer anymore. At the time when it was built, UI best practices weren’t around so didn’t know to make it open source/replicable. Stuck with old tables and geographies even though the functionality isn’t there. There are a lot of usability problems, but a lot of people who are more advanced researchers in subsidized housing policy find it useful because they know what they’re looking for.

April: Both NY and Cleveland have a housing one and a neighborhood one.

Brian: Thinking about using CartoDB.

Mike: The whole idea of using visualization tools like Tableau and CartoDB are easier and cheaper than dumping all the data in one place and letting people choose. I think as far as NNIP partners go, you could get a lot of mileage out of putting together a visualization and tweeting it out. It’s limiting though, in that someone may want to know change over time or something specific and you would have to go back in the weeds in that. I think as a center, we’re doing three things, which is investing in our in-house built technology, investing in one-off visualizations, and eventually investing in an open data platform. Hopefully, we could dump it into one container and API it out to visualizations, open data platform, and other products.

Brian: And there’s the maintenance is the thing. We didn’t anticipate the extent to which we needed to upload the data, and when the person left, we weren’t able to update. For the web thing, there is a SQL database that we’re running the web application off of, but the analysis that we’re doing is all out of CSVs, Excel, ArcGIS. We’re teaching RAs to use SAS and SQL but what we like about CartoDB is that we could upload CSVs and use them to map.

Liza: We’re using academic resource computing at the university and they are really helpful, but they are not on the same page with what we’re doing. We would be interested in potentially sharing the NST framework because what we’re doing is not working.

April: We’re kind of working on the Prov Plan format of build technology better, so that maybe we license the framework and maybe we’ll be able to get improvements.

Mike: The analysts are the ones computing the data and then the programmer has a bunch of SQL scripts to load it, so the data refreshes weekly and those are pretty efficient ETL tools. The issue is that to add a new indicator, you have to rebuild the whole database and we have developed SQL scripts and they can run out of a command prompt, but sometimes they need to be babysat. Most of our staff could potentially do it, but we don’t have the time to learn. He’s eventually leaving, so we’re hiring his replacement.

Lisa: We are like NY in that we have a legacy system but we can’t make any updates to it. From 2007 or 2008. PolicyMap bought it from someone who built it, who went on to Apple. Researchers might want the whole data, but the rest of the users just want one data point.

Brian: We’re using ArcGIS Online and have a license for the foreseeable future, but what happens when the state cuts it or they start to charge more and you don’t have that anymore.

Natalie: We’re just switching now from Weave.

April: Now demo-ing the Provident plan community profiles. Talk to Bob or Liz or anyone from Providence about the profiles. They did a webinar where they could show you the backend.

Mike: The data coming from the community profile s here is coming from the Census API and you don’t even have to process it, they don’t have to update.

Brian: A lot of the time we’re working with reporters who don’t know what data they’re looking for and wouldn’t even know if you gave them the data so you can’t substitute a website for that. But also, we have people who are looking for certain numbers in the nonprofit field. The real question, though, is what is the thing that people don’t know to look to us for. We do this one map that we blast out on facebook, but if that could be not just a map but a live tool?

Audrey: We use Weave through NeighborhoodNexus and it is really easy to use data through csv, so that’s why we like it. THere are some people who have trouble using it, so we host tutorials.

Mike: That’s good because for the NST the pretext is that you have to come to a training not just to work with it, but to understand the nuance of using that data. It’s for a specific purpose. We have a lot of key power users who are out there in certain topical areas who are more engaged with the media and that allows us to play Switzerland a little more, and we let our partners do a little more of the advocating. In some ways, we don’t control the conversation, but also it keeps us more neutral.

Lisa: I don’t mean to rag on Weave, I think that it’s just more meant for power users and that’s not what we work with in Miami.

Audrey: That’s true there are a lot of statistical components like the scatterplot at the bottom. Demonstrating the Neighborhood Nexus page. We use the Weave portal for our monthly regional snapshot or just for quick requests.

NNIP Website review

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1rKQhnpZpqn6dh2t77jKueNPQuo1Umbkk-7B5OFCMlYk/edit?usp=sharing>