Task 1: 2000 Campaign Visits

Time: No limit, but you should not need to spend more than one day
Files: task1.zip

The .zip archive contains a comma-separated data file organized by county and date, containing indicators, for each date and county, for whether a given presidential candidate visited the county on that date. The file also includes counts of the number of mentions of each candidate in the local newspaper.

Focusing on the major party candidates (i.e. ignoring Bradley and Buchanan), we'd like you to use these data to produce your best answer to the following question:

** Does a campaign visit by a candidate affect the amount of newspaper coverage the candidate receives? **

We'd like you not only to decide what you think is the answer but also to prepare a document arguing for that based on the evidence.

You should feel free to use whatever techniques you want. The goal here is not to show off hi-tech econometrics, but rather to show us how you think about data. Sometimes something as simple as a graph can do more for an argument than all the estimators in the world.

Also, you need not take the structure of data as written in stone. If there are ways you'd like to transform the variables or restructure the data, please feel free. Think of this as a small research project: you have a dataset, and you need to find the best answer you can to a real-world question. You also need to justify it to an outsider (in this case, us!).

Task 2: Data Manipulation

Time: No limit; complete as quickly as you can
Files: task2.zip

The zip archive contains a document Data Description.pdf which describes the task in detail. You will need to take the data in newspapers.txt and perform some simple manipulations. You are welcome to use whatever tool you like for this--Matlab or a statistical program like Stata would work well. We are interested in knowing how quickly you can complete this task. You should therefore not look at data description.pdf until you are ready to start working on it, and you should record the time from when you first look at data description.pdf until you are finished. You should send us both the output data and the code that produced it.

When you submit the results, please report the total time you spent on each task.