City Weather Explorer Mining Project Abigail Burns

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Abstract

A number of major United States cities are predicted to experience increasingly severe weather as a result of climate change and the geographic characteristics which heighten their vulnerability to it (e.g. high population, ocean proximity). These changes are significant enough to impact commerce, lifestyle choices, and intra-national migration.

As an avid traveler and climate advocate, I chose to develop an interactive application for weather insights for three U.S. cities expected to have worsening climate. Weather data and news were mined for each city and subsequently visualized. A shiny application wrapped these elements together to present weather data and news for Los Angeles, Orlando, and New Orleans over the past 50 years.

Data and Methods

I began by collecting weather data from the Wunderground website for the three cities to include temperature, wind, and precipitation metrics over 50 years (*Weather History*). Scraping was accomplished with Selenium; preprocessing with pandas organized the data into spreadsheets. Because the scraping process required many workarounds for timeouts and errors along with tedious pivoting and formatting steps, I consulted ChatGPT to define the Python scraping functions for this step (OpenAI).

To supplement the weather information, I parsed 100 "severe weather" Google News RSS feeds from 2024 and 2025 for each city and loaded them into Excel files using tidyRSS (*Google News*). Packages quanteda, tm, and syuzhet were applied to produce frequency-based word clouds and sentiment analysis (Mhatre, S.).

I then programmed the Shiny web app by building on previously written applications and using custom CSS styling (Strayer, *W3Schools.com*). The app uses a sidebar layout featuring

dropdown menus for city and weather variable and slider input for year range (Wickham, H.). Weather data is presented over a time period of up to 50 years using Grammar of Graphics (ggplot2) methods. Textual analysis presents news headline themes and sentiments using a word cloud and bar chart with colors ascribed to match sentiment (red for anger, etc.). These included many climatic keywords describing event type and severity, which expressed primarily fear, anticipation, and anger.

Although word association was biased by the specific inclusion of "severe weather" in the newsfeed search, the results confirm the phenomenon of changing weather and climate vulnerability for the three selected cities alongside quantitative data showing changes and shifts in temperature, precipitation and wind over time. I developed the app in a series of modules before combining them in Shiny, encountering minimal issues with the final deployments such as missing titles, unloaded libraries and visually unbalanced elements.

Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative analysis presented in this project has the advantage of being easily modified and recollected for new input data and text. However, they could be expanded to include more and better visualizations. One particularly admirable program for insightful weather graphs and charts is hosted by Weather Spark (*New Orleans Climate*).

This knowledge mining project produces practical and useful implementation of graphical and NLP methods. Developed content presents climate characterization and changes for three particularly volatile U.S. cities, to be applied iteratively and for any number of locations in the future. I recommend the addition of 17 U.S. cities to complete the list of the top ten best and worst U.S. cities for climate change as identified by Sachon and Howard (2022).

References

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Code Appendix

scrape_weather_m_wide.py

```
import time
import pandas as pd
import random
import os
from datetime import datetime, timedelta
from dateutil.relativedelta import relativedelta
from selenium import webdriver
from selenium.webdriver.chrome.service import Service
from selenium.webdriver.chrome.options import Options
from selenium.webdriver.support.ui import WebDriverWait
from selenium.common.exceptions import WebDriverException
from webdriver_manager.chrome import ChromeDriverManager
def init driver(headless=True):
    options = Options()
    if headless:
        options.add_argument("--headless=new")
    options.add_argument("--disable-gpu")
    options.add_argument("--disable-blink-features=AutomationControlled")
    options.add_argument("--window-size=1920x1080")
    options.add_argument("user-agent=Mozilla/5.0 (Windows NT 10.0; Win64; x64)")
    service = Service(ChromeDriverManager().install())
    return webdriver.Chrome(service=service, options=options)
def extract_table_data(driver):
    script = """
    const host = document.querySelector("lib-city-history-summary");
    if (!host) {
        const legacyTable = document.querySelector("table");
        if (!legacyTable) return "X no legacy table found";
        let rows = legacyTable.querySelectorAll("tbody tr");
        return Array.from(rows).map(row =>
            Array.from(row.querySelectorAll("td")).map(cell =>
cell.innerText.trim())
        );
    if (!host.shadowRoot) {
        const legacyTable = document.querySelector("table");
        if (!legacyTable) return "X no shadowRoot and no fallback table found";
        let rows = legacyTable.querySelectorAll("tbody tr"):
```

```
return Array.from(rows).map(row =>
            Array.from(row.querySelectorAll("td")).map(cell =>
cell.innerText.trim())
        );
    let rows = host.shadowRoot.querySelectorAll("table tbody tr");
    return Array.from(rows).map(row =>
        Array.from(row.querySelectorAll("td")).map(cell => cell.innerText.trim())
    return driver.execute script(script)
def clean weather summary table(raw rows, date str):
    cleaned_data = []
    count = 0
    for row in raw rows:
        count += 1
        if len(row) == 0:
            continue
        if len(row) >= 2:
            max = row[0].strip()
            avg = row[1].strip()
            min = row[2].strip()
            def match_row(count):
                d_count = {
                    1: "Max Temperature",
                    2: "Avg Temperature",
                    3: "Min Temperature",
                    4: "Dew Point",
                    5: "Precipitation",
                    6: "Snowdepth",
                    7: "Wind",
                    8: "Gust Wind",
                    9: "Sea Level Pressure"
                x = d_count[count]
                return x
            section = match_row(count)
```

```
cleaned_data.append({
                "Date": date str,
                "Section": section,
                "Max": max,
                "Average": avg,
                "Min": min
            })
    return pd.DataFrame(cleaned data)
def pivot monthly summary(df):
    # Melt to long format
    df_long = df.melt(id_vars=["Date", "Section"],
                      value vars=["Max", "Average", "Min"],
                      var_name="Statistic",
                      value name="Value")
    # Create combined column name: Section Statistic
    df long["Variable"] = df long["Section"].str.replace(r"[^\w]+", " ",
regex=True) + "_" + df_long["Statistic"]
    # Pivot to wide format
    df_wide = df_long.pivot_table(index="Date", columns="Variable",
values="Value", aggfunc="first").reset index()
    # Convert strings to numeric
    for col in df wide.columns:
        if col != "Date":
            df_wide[col] = pd.to_numeric(df_wide[col], errors="coerce")
    return df_wide
def scrape_weather_for_month(driver, date_str, city, state, station, retries=1):
f"https://www.wunderground.com/history/monthly/us/{state}/{city}/{station}/date/{
date str}"
    print(f"\nScraping: {date str}")
    attempt = 0
    while attempt <= retries:
        try:
            driver.get(url)
            WebDriverWait(driver, 15).until(
                lambda d: d.execute_script("return
document.querySelector('table') !== null || document.querySelector('lib-city-
history-summary') !== null")
```

```
time.sleep(2)
            rows = extract table data(driver)
            if isinstance(rows, str):
                print(f"JS Error on {date str}: {rows}")
                raise Exception(rows)
            if not rows:
                print(f"No data extracted on {date str}")
                raise Exception("No rows found")
            df month = clean weather summary table(rows, date str)
            print(f"Extracted {len(df_month)} rows on {date_str}")
            return df_month
        except (Exception, WebDriverException) as e:
            print(f"Attempt {attempt + 1} failed for {date str}: {e}")
            if attempt == retries:
                print(f"Giving up on {date str}")
                return pd.DataFrame()
            else:
                attempt += 1
                time.sleep(5)
                try:
                    driver.refresh()
                except:
                    # Browser is dead — reinitialize driver
                    print("Refreshing driver...")
                    driver.quit()
                    driver = init_driver(headless=True)
def scrape range(start date, end date, city, state, station, headless=True):
    driver = init_driver(headless=headless)
    all data = []
    current date = datetime.strptime(start date, "%Y-%m")
    end_date_obj = datetime.strptime(end_date, "%Y-%m")
    while current date <= end date obj:
        time.sleep(random.uniform(3,7))
        date_str = current_date.strftime("%Y-%m")
        df_month = scrape_weather_for_month(driver, date_str, city, state,
station)
        if df month is not None and not df month.empty:
```

```
all_data.append(df_month)
    current_date += relativedelta(months=3)

driver.quit()

if all_data:
    df_long = pd.concat(all_data, ignore_index=True)
    df_long.to_excel(f"{city}_scraped.xlsx")
    df_wide = pivot_monthly_summary(df_long)
    df_wide.to_excel(f"{city}_weather.xlsx")
    return df_wide

else:
    print("No data scraped.")
    return pd.DataFrame()
```

weather.py

```
import os
import scrape_weather_m_wide
# Change the current working directory
path = r"C:\Users\Owner\Documents\Knowledge_Mining\weather"
os.chdir(path)
# Set parameters
start date = "1975-03"
end date = "2025-03"
station code 1 = "KCALOSAN1265"
city_1 = "los-angeles"
state 1 = "ca"
station code 2 = "KFLORLAN438"
city_2 = "orlando"
state 2 = "fl"
station code 3 = "KLANEWOR503"
city_3 = "new-orleans"
state 3 = "la"
# scrape weather_m_wide.scrape_range(start_date, end_date, city_1, state_1,
station code 1)
# scrape_weather_m_wide.scrape_range(start_date, end_date, city_2, state_2,
station code 2)
scrape_weather_m_wide.scrape_range(start_date, end_date, city_3, state_3,
station_code_3)
```

weatherrss_scraping.R

```
library(tidyverse)
library(tidyRSS)
library(dplyr)
library(writexl)
## Google
# Function to scrape RSS by query and time
scrape_gnews_rss_dates <- function(keyword, start date, end date) {</pre>
  # Create search string
  query <- paste0(keyword, " after:", start date, " before:", end date)
  encoded query <- URLencode(query)</pre>
  # Form RSS URL
  google url <- paste0("https://news.google.com/rss/search?q=",</pre>
encoded_query, "&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en")
  # Fetch RSS feed
  google feed <- tidyRSS::tidyfeed(google url)</pre>
  # Extract data
  google data <- google feed %>%
    select(item title, item description, item link, item pub date) %>%
  return (google data)
}
# Fetch (city) news between March 1975 and March 2025
la keywords <- c("Los Angeles severe weather")</pre>
orl keywords <- c("Orlando severe weather")</pre>
nola keywords <- c("New Orleans severe weather")</pre>
la gnews <- bind rows(</pre>
  lapply(la keywords, function(k) scrape gnews rss dates(k, "1975-03-01",
"2025-03-01"))
orl gnews <- bind rows(
  lapply(orl keywords, function(k) scrape gnews rss dates(k, "1975-03-01",
"2025-03-01"))
nola gnews <- bind rows(</pre>
 lapply (nola keywords, function(k) scrape gnews rss dates(k, "1975-03-01",
"2025-03-01"))
)
# View
print(nrow(la gnews))
print(nrow(orl gnews))
print(nrow(nola gnews))
# Send to Excel
write xlsx(la gnews, "los-angeles gnews.xlsx")
write xlsx(orl gnews, "orlando gnews.xlsx")
write xlsx(nola gnews, "new-orleans gnews.xlsx")
```

shiny_weather.R

```
library(shiny)
library(shinyWidgets)
library(bslib)
library(readxl)
library(quanteda)
library(quanteda.textmodels)
library(quanteda.textplots)
library (wordcloud)
library(tm)
library(syuzhet)
library(ggplot2)
library(dplyr)
library(lubridate)
library(tidyr)
library(zoo)
cities <- c("los-angeles"="Los Angeles",
               "orlando"="Orlando",
               "new-orleans"="New Orleans")
remove <- c("los", "angeles", "california",</pre>
             "orlando", "florida", "new", "orleans",
             "louisiana", "l.a", "weather", "today",
             "fox", "wesh", "wftv", "wkmg", "nbc", "usa",
             "wwltv", "wdsu", "nola", "times", "newsroom",
             "wgno", "entergy", "wwltv.com",
             "fox8live.com", "abc7", "news", "fox8live",
             "11", "13", "35", "cnn", "national", "service",
             "gov", "channel", "eastern", "southern", "south", "central")
# Define UIs for application
ui <- fluidPage(</pre>
  tags$head(
    # Note the wrapping of the string in HTML()
    tags$style(HTML("
      @import url('https://fonts.googleapis.com/css2?family=Roboto');
      body {
        background-color: #E4E4E4;
        color: blue
      h2 {
        font-family: 'Roboto', sans-serif
      .shiny-input-container {
        color: darkorchid
      }"))
  titlePanel("City Weather Explorer"),
  sidebarLayout(
    sidebarPanel(
      selectInput("city", "Select City", choices = c("los-angeles",
"orlando", "new-orleans")),
      selectInput("variable", "Select Variable", choices = c(
        "Avg Temperature Average",
```

```
"Avg Temperature Max",
        "Avg Temperature Min",
        "Max Temperature_Average",
        "Max Temperature Max",
        "Max Temperature Min",
        "Min Temperature Average",
        "Min Temperature Max",
        "Min Temperature Min",
        "Dew Point Average",
        "Dew Point Max",
        "Dew Point Min",
        "Precipitation_Average",
        "Precipitation Max",
        "Precipitation Min",
        "Wind Average",
        "Wind Max",
        "Wind Min",
        "Gust Wind Average",
        "Gust Wind Max",
        "Gust Wind Min")),
      checkboxInput("show anomaly", "Show Anomalies (Z-scores)", FALSE),
      chooseSliderSkin("Round"),
      sliderInput("years", "Year Range", sep = "",
                   min = 1975, max = 2025, value = c(1975, 2025), step = 1),
      plotOutput("wordcloud"),
      width=4
    ),
    mainPanel(
      plotOutput("weatherPlot"),
      plotOutput("barplot")
  )
)
server <- function(input, output, session) {</pre>
  # Reactively load the weather data .xlsx file for selected city
  city data <- reactive({</pre>
    file path <- paste0(input$city, " weather.xlsx")</pre>
    df <- read excel(file path)</pre>
    df$Date <- as.yearmon(df$Date) # convert to yearmon</pre>
    df
  })
  # Filtered data based on year range
  filtered data <- reactive({</pre>
    req(city data())
    city data() %>%
      filter(year(Date) >= input$years[1],
              year(Date) <= input$years[2])</pre>
  })
  output$weatherPlot <- renderPlot({</pre>
    req(input$variable)
    df <- filtered data()</pre>
    if (input$show anomaly) {
      df <- df %>%
        mutate(Month = month(Date),
                Year = year(Date)) %>%
        group by (Month) %>%
```

```
mutate(
          Month Mean = mean(.data[[input$variable]], na.rm = TRUE),
          Anomaly = .data[[input$variable]] - Month Mean,
          Month SD = sd(.data[[input$variable]], na.rm = TRUE),
          Z = Anomaly / Month SD
        ) 응>응
        ungroup()
      ggplot(df, aes(x = Date, y = Z)) +
        geom col(fill = "tomato") +
        labs(title = paste("Anomalies for", input$variable, "in",
cities[input$city]),
             y = "Anomaly from Monthly Mean", x = NULL)
    } else {
      ggplot(df, aes(x = Date, y = .data[[input$variable]])) +
        geom_line(color = "blue") +
        geom point() +
        labs(title = paste(input$variable, "over Time in",
cities[input$city]),
             y = input$variable, x = NULL)
    }
  })
  # Reactively load the news headlines .xlsx file for selected city
  output$wordcloud <- renderPlot({</pre>
    req(input$city)
    # Quanteda corpus
    corp <- corpus(</pre>
      x = read excel(paste0(input$city, " gnews.xlsx")),
      docid field = "item link",
      text field = "item title",
      meta = list(),
      unique_docnames = TRUE
    # Wordcloud
    dfm <- corp %>%
      tokens(remove punct = TRUE) %>%
      tokens remove(stopwords("english")) %>%
      tokens remove (remove) %>%
      dfm() %>%
      dfm trim(min termfreq = 2, verbose = FALSE)
    my palette <- c("blueviolet","blue","chartreuse","red")</pre>
    set.seed(100)
    wordcloud <- textplot wordcloud(dfm, min size=1,</pre>
                                   max size=4, color=my palette)
  })
  # Reactively load the news headlines .xlsx file for selected city
  output$barplot <- renderPlot({</pre>
    req(input$city)
    # tm corpus
    x <- read excel(paste0(input$city, " gnews.xlsx"))</pre>
    docs <- data.frame(</pre>
      Х,
      doc id=x$item link,
      text=x$item title)
    ds <- DataframeSource(docs)</pre>
    words.corpus <- Corpus(ds)</pre>
    # Turn all words to lower case
```

```
words.corpus <- tm map(words.corpus, content transformer(tolower))</pre>
    # Remove punctuations, numbers, common terms
    words.corpus <- tm map(words.corpus, removePunctuation)</pre>
    words.corpus <- tm map(words.corpus, removeNumbers)</pre>
    words.corpus <- tm map(words.corpus, removeWords,</pre>
                             remove)
    # Remove stopwords, then create uniform bag of words
    words.corpus <- tm map(words.corpus, removeWords, stopwords("english"))</pre>
    # Create Term Document Matrix
    tdm <- TermDocumentMatrix(words.corpus)</pre>
    m <- as.matrix(tdm)</pre>
    wordCounts <- rowSums(m)</pre>
    wordCounts <- sort(wordCounts, decreasing=TRUE)</pre>
    # Create Wordcloud using wordcloud package
    cloudFrame <- data.frame(word=names(wordCounts),freq=wordCounts)</pre>
    # Sentiment classification
    d <- get nrc sentiment(cloudFrame$word)</pre>
    # transpose
    td<-data.frame(t(d))
    # rowSums computes column sums across rows for each level of a grouping
variable.
    td new <- data.frame(rowSums(td))</pre>
    # Transformation and cleaning
    names(td new)[1] <- "count"</pre>
    td new <- cbind("sentiment" = rownames(td new), td new)</pre>
    rownames(td new) <- NULL
    td new2<-td new[1:8,]
    # Plot count of words associated with each sentiment
    ggplot(data=td new2,
           mapping = aes(x=sentiment, y=count, fill=sentiment)) +
      geom bar(stat='identity') +
      scale fill manual(values=c("red",
                                  "darkviolet",
                                  "#7cae00",
                                  "gray20",
                                  "#ff61cc",
                                  "darkblue",
                                  "orange",
                                  "#008b4b")) +
      labs(title = paste("'Severe Weather' News Sentiment for",
cities[input$city]))
  })
}
shinyApp(ui = ui, server = server)
```

AI Appendix

Prompts	Prompt Type	Tool Used	Response
 "Can you give an example of using Selenium with data from https://www.wunderground. com/history/daily/us/tx/dalla s/KDAL?" "Can you modify the script for R packages, and scrape multiple dates?" "Let's see this wrapped into a function." "Let's switch to Selenium + Python." "It returned "No data found."" 	Script Generation	ChatGPT	Got it — if the script returned "No data found", then Selenium likely reached the page, but failed to find or extract the weather table rows. This is common with modern dynamic sites like Wunderground. Let's debug and fix it step by step.
			Likely Reasons & Solutions ◆ 1. The page layout changed or data is inside Shadow DOM Wunderground wraps key content inside Shadow DOM — a modern HTML feature that Selenium can't access directly with find_element(By.XPATH). Solution: We'll use JavaScript execution to extract from the Shadow DOM.
			Updated Working Solution Using Shadow DOM Access Let's revise your script to access the Shadow DOM via JavaScript: Before You Run: Please keep a real browser open to monitor whether you're getting blocked by CAPTCHA
			New Python Script with JavaScript Shadow DOM Access import time import pandas as pd from selenium import webdriver from selenium.webdriver.chrome.service import Service from selenium.webdriver.chrome.options import Options

```
from webdriver manager.chrome import
ChromeDriverManager
from datetime import datetime, timedelta
def init driver():
    options = Options()
    options.add argument("--headless=new") # modern
headless mode
    options.add argument("--disable-blink-
features=AutomationControlled")
    options.add argument("--disable-gpu")
    options.add argument("--no-sandbox")
    options.add argument("--window-size=1920x1080")
    service =
Service(ChromeDriverManager().install())
    driver = webdriver.Chrome(service=service,
options=options)
    return driver
def extract table data(driver):
    # Run JS to pierce Shadow DOM and grab the table
    script = """
    const table = document.guerySelector("lib-city-
history-observation");
    if (!table) return '';
    const shadowRoot = table.shadowRoot;
    const rows = shadowRoot.querySelectorAll("table
tbody tr");
    return Array.from(rows).map(row =>
Array.from(row.querySelectorAll("td")).map(cell =>
cell.innerText.trim())
    );
    return driver.execute script(script)
def scrape weather for date(driver, date str,
city="dallas", state="tx", station="KDAL"):
    url =
f"https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/{sta
te}/{city}/{station}/date/{date str}"
```

```
print(f"Scraping: {date str}")
   driver.get(url)
    time.sleep(8) # wait for full JS load
    try:
        rows = extract table data(driver)
       daily data = [[date str] + row for row in
rows if rowl
        return daily data
   except Exception as e:
       print(f"Error on {date str}: {e}")
        return []
def scrape range(start date, end date,
city="dallas", state="tx", station="KDAL"):
   driver = init driver()
   all data = []
   current date = datetime.strptime(start date,
"%Y-%m-%d")
    end date obj = datetime.strptime(end date, "%Y-
%m-%d")
   while current date <= end date obj:</pre>
        date str = current date.strftime("%Y-%m-%d")
       daily data = scrape weather for date(driver,
date str, city, state, station)
        all data.extend(daily data)
        current date += timedelta(days=1)
   driver.quit()
   if all data:
        # infer column count and fill as needed
       max cols = max(len(row) for row in all data)
        columns = ["Date"] + [f"Col{i}" for i in
range(1, max cols)]
        df = pd.DataFrame(all data,
columns=columns[:len(all data[0])])
       return df
   else:
        print("No data found.")
```

			<pre>return pd.DataFrame() # Run scraper df_weather = scrape_range("2023-03-01", "2023-03- 03") print(df_weather.head()) Output You should now get a populated DataFrame with columns like: Date Time Temp Dew Point Humidity Wind</pre>	
"I would like to pivot into wide format."	Script Generation	ChatGPT	 Tips Shadow DOM requires JavaScript DOM traversal, not .find_element() Consider adding random.uniform(6, 10) wait times to avoid rate-limiting If you still get blocked, try rotating user agents or using undetected-chromedriver Perfect! Pivoting your cleaned weather summary data into wide format will make it easier to: Run time series or panel analysis Feed into ML models (e.g., forecasting, clustering) Visualize with one row per date and columns like Temperature_High, Humidity_Avg, etc. 	
			Starting Point: Your Current Data Your scraped data is in long format: Date Section Metric Value 1975-03-23 Temperature High 56 °F 1975-03-23 Temperature Low 34 °F 1975-03-23 Wind Speed 8 mph	

Goal: Pivot to Wide Format We want:
Date Temperature_High Temperature_Low Wind_Spec
1975-03-23 56 34 8
Step 1: Create a Wide Format Table Here's a function that does the pivot after scraping: def pivot_weather_summary(df_long): # Create a combined column: Section_Metric (e.g., Temperature_High) df_long["Variable"] = df_long["Section"].str.replace(r"\s+", "_", regex=True) + "_" + \ df_long["Metric"].str.replace(r"\s+", "_", regex=True) # Remove units from Value column (optional: keep only numeric part) df_long["Cleaned_Value"] = df_long["Value"].str.extract(r"([-+]?[0-9]*\.?[0-9]+)") # Pivot the data df_wide = df_long.pivot_table(index="Date", columns="Variable", values="Cleaned_Value", aggfunc="first").reset_index()
return df_wide
Example Usage: # After scraping: df_long = scrape_range("1975-03-23", "1976-03-22", headless=True)

	<pre># Pivot to wide format df_wide = pivot_weather_summary(df_long) # Preview print(df_wide.head()) # Save df_wide.to_csv("wunderground_weather_pivoted.csv", index=False)</pre>
	Output Format Date Temperature_High Temperature_Low Wind_Spect 1975-03-23 56 34 8 • All values are strings by default, but you can convert to float with: df_wide = df_wide.astype({col: float for col in df_wide.columns if col != 'Date'})