THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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Finding Geospatial Data

Learning objective: Practice conducting a "data reference interview" as a way of framing your search strategy for geospatial data.

1) What

- Briefly describe your research topic. What type of analysis are you planning?

- What data will you need to address this topic or carry out this analysis? Ask yourself things like:
    - What types of data am I seeking (e.g., statistics, boundaries, land cover, imagery)?
    - What format will those data likely be in (e.g., text, tabular, vector, raster)?
    - What attribute information do I need?

2) Where

- Ask yourself things like:
    - What geographic area(s) am I studying?
    - What spatial scale/resolution am I planning to use for my analysis, and is this realistic?

3) When

- Ask yourself things like:
    - What time period(s) am I studying?
    - Is my analysis based on a single point in time or am I comparing a time series?
    - What is the desired periodicity of data collection (e.g., daily, annually, every decade), and is this realistic?

4) Who

- Ask yourself things like:
    - Who is likely to care about this research topic and dataset?
    - What government agencies, educational institutions, non-profits, research centers, commercial entities, or other organizations may collect and distribute these data?
    - Am I looking for datasets used in or generated through specific publications (and if so, what are they)?

5) How

- Ask yourself things like:
    - How were the data collected? Is information about the collection methodology easily accessible and from a reliable source?
    - Are the data GIS-ready? If not, how will I prepare them for use in my project?
    - Are the data likely to be publicly/freely accessible, or might there be a cost?
    - Are there limitations on how the data can be used in my research?
    - How must I cite these data if I use them in my own work?

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Other Notes/Questions: