Finder! Map the World's Data.

User Manual

WHAT IS FINDER?

Finder is a browser-based application for finding, organizing, and sharing GeoData in common formats. Designed to both host and store GeoData, Finder enables you to:

- Store and organize disparate data from all ends of your organization in one central location.
- Increase data efficiency with easy-to-use open standards, browser-based application that allows both technical and non-technical users to find, create and share GeoData rapidly in a variety of formats that work in both traditional GIS and newer GeoWeb workflows.

HOW DO I CREATE AN ACCOUNT?

The first step to using Finder to download data is to create a user account. This can be done by clicking on the **30-second signup** link in the upper right hand corner of the Finder homepage. From here select a unique login name and fill out the email, name, and password fields and your registration is complete.

Once your login is complete you are ready to start downloading the data that you need. The Finder platform is designed to make the download process as user friendly as possible.

HOW DO I FIND DATA?

Finder enables you to both search and browse our ever growing data repository. The search function is as easy as typing in a keyword or phrase into the search bar on the Finder homepage. You can improve your search experience, by searching for data by source, location, time period, or title keywords. The results page will display any datasets that match your keywords in either their title and/or tags and you are able to download any results as a Shapefile, CSV, or KML file.

The browser function makes use of our topical and locational vocabulary and enables the user to browse the repository by category. These broad categories break up the thousands of datasets available through Finder so that you can find the data you want, quickly. Browsing is as simple as clicking on a subcategory in the browser section of the Finder homepage. Click the a category once link to see the category menu and then select either the main category or any of the subcategories. Again, once you have found data of interest you are able to download it in any of supported formats.

WHAT FILE FORMATS DOES FINDER SUPPORT?

The Finder platform supports both import of the following file types:

- Shapefiles
- CSV   (Comma Separated Values)

The Finder platform supports both export of the following file types:

- Shapefiles
- CSV   (Comma Separated Values)
- KML   (Keyhole Markup Language)

Finder also allows for conversion between the different file formats

WHAT IS A SHAPEFILE?

A complete shapefile is a set of files that contains geospatial vector data, created using ESRI software applications. This file type is commonly used for geographic information systems (GIS) software.

A shapefile is comprised of multiple files/extensions. The required files for use with Finder are:

- .shp - the file that stores the feature geometry
- .shx - the file that stores the index of the feature geometry
- .dbf - the dBASE, or database, file that stores the attribute information of features

Shapefiles are used to define point, polyline, and polygon files that are spatially referenced.

WHAT IS A COMMA SEPARATED VALUES (CSV) FILE?

CSV is a type of data format in which each piece of data is separated by a comma. This is a popular format for transferring data from one application to another, because most database systems are able to import and export comma-delimited data.

For example, data pulled from a database and represented in comma-delimited format looks something like the following. Each column value is separated by a comma from the next column's value and each row starts a new line:

Adams, Jane, 46, female, New York
Doe, John, 32, male, California

Jones, Sam, 13, male, Texas
Smith, Mary, 64, female, Louisiana

CSV files are commonly created and/or edited in any spreadsheet application, such as Microsoft Excel or Open Office Calc.

WHAT IS A KEYHOLE MARKUP LANGUAGE (KML) FILE?

Keyhole Markup Language (KML) is an XML-based language for managing the display of 3D geospatial data in Google Maps and Google Earth. KML is a file format used to display geographic data in an Earth browser such as Google Earth, Google Maps, Google Maps for mobile, and NASA WorldWind.

SHAPEFILE UPLOAD PROCESS

The first step to using Finder is to create a user account. This can be done by clicking on the **30-second signup** link in the upper right hand corner of the Finder homepage. From here select a unique login name and fill out the email, name, and password fields and your registration is complete.

Once your login is complete you are ready to start uploading your shapefiles. The Finder platform is designed to make the upload process as user friendly as possible, and can be done in this easy three step process:

- First, select the UPLOAD A SHAPFILE link on the Finder homepage.
- Second, browse your computer and input the necessary shapefile extensions (.shp , .shx , .dbf).
- Lastly, click the UPLOAD button!

That is all it takes to get your shapefile up and running in Finder!

On the following page you will either be met with a Success screen or an Error screen to let you know how your upload went. If you are met with an error screen, please see our formatting guidelines/requirements and our troubleshooting sections for tips on how to get your data uploaded properly.

If you are met with success, congratulations are in order! From here we ask that you title and tag your dataset.

* Please see our Title and Tagging guidelines *

On the rest of this page you are given the choice to share your dataset with the community or keep it private to yourself. Only you, as the creator, are able to edit and delete the original dataset, even if you choose to share your work with the community.

The rest of this page is dedicated to filling out the metadata, background information, about your dataset. It is very important to accurately fill as much of this page as possible. So please take a few moments to describe the data, cite your source, and complete the dataset contact information sections.

* Please see the Metadata Importance Section *

SPREADSHEET (CSV) UPLOAD PROCESS

The first step to using Finder is to create a user account. This can be done by clicking on the **30-second signup** link in the upper right hand corner of the Finder homepage. From here select a unique login name and fill out the email, name, and password fields and your registration is complete.

Once your login is complete you are ready to start uploading your spreadsheet (CSV) files. The Finder platform is designed to make the upload process as user friendly as possible, and can be done in this easy three step process:

- First, select the UPLOAD A SPREADSHEET link on the Finder homepage.
- Second, browse your computer and open your CSV file.
- Lastly, click the UPLOAD button!

That is all it takes to get your spreadsheet (CSV) up and running in Finder!

On the following page you will either be met with a Success screen or an Error screen to let you know how your upload went. If you are met with an error screen, please see our formatting guidelines/requirements and our troubleshooting sections for tips on how to get your data uploaded properly.

If you are met with success, congratulations are in order! From here we ask that you title and tag your dataset.

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WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A CSV FILE TO BE UPLOADED?

The Finder platform only requires that you have longitude and latitude coordinates associated to each point you wish to display. Those coordinates need to be in decimal degree format. Please see the longitude and latitude requirements FAQ. This is a unique feature to Finder that eliminates the need for third part GIS software programs (No Shapfiles!).

WHAT ARE THE LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE FORMAT REQUIREMENTS?

The coordinates must be in decimal degree format in your CSV file for proper uploading. By maintaining as many decimal places as possible, the coordinates will most accurately place your points within the file.

HOW DO I OBTAIN THE COORDINATES FOR MY DATA?

By Geocoding your data; what is Geocoding?

Geocoding is the process of assigning geographic coordinates (e.g. latitude-longitude) to street addresses, as well as other points and features. With geographic coordinates, the features can then be mapped and entered into Geographic Information Systems. Here are a few free geocoding providers that we have found to be useful:

- Batchgeocode.com
- Gpsvisualizer.com/geocoding.html
- Geocoder.us
- Travelgis.com
- Freegeocode.com

It is important to note that the more detailed information provided to and taken from the geocoding process will create a more accurate placement of your point value. Another useful tip is to retain as many decimal places in your coordinates as possible.

WHAT ARE THE TITLE GUIDELINES?

To make the titles as best as they can be, we have established a general guideline for naming your datasets. We wanted to include the following information in the title, and keep them separated by commas:

Source, Title, Location, Time Period Covered

- Source: the source from where this data originated
- Title: A short description of your dataset
- Location: the lowest geographic level that your dataset covers
- Time Period Covered: the time period in which your data covers

Here are a few examples of both good and bad dataset titles:

BAD: **Last year's emission data**

BAD: **Test**

BAD: **Test2**

GOOD: **OECD, Nominal GDP, USA, 2007-2008**

GOOD: **US Census, Average Household Income: Block Level, Maryland, 2000**

It is important to create accurate titles so that both you and other users can continue to enjoy easy searching and browsing of the data repository.

WHAT ARE THE TAGGING GUIDELINES?

Tagging enables the users to link some basic keywords and terms to their dataset. These tags will be picked up by the search and the browsing capabilities within Finder. This is just another step that will help everyone in the community to quickly and easily find the data that they need. To aid in the tagging process we have implemented a few features that will help to accurately tag you data.

We have developed a tagging hierarchy that covers a wide range of categories. From the first level on down the hierarchy is broken up into a number of different subcategory levels. Using

the tagging hierarchy the user can work their way down from the top in order to best define their dataset.

Working with the hierarchy and commonly used tags, the area under the tagging bar will be populated with possibly relevant tags that you can just click to add.

Another feature to note is the tagging alert that appears to let you know that you have entered a tag that doesn't fall into the hierarchy or hasn't been used before. This is just to let you know that this tag is new to the system, and as a result it will not be as easy to find your data using this specific tag.

WHAT IS METADATA, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Metadata is essentially "data about data." Metadata (sometimes written 'meta data') are used to facilitate the understanding, characteristics, and management usage of data.

The importance of Metadata:

Protects investment in data:

- Sets the stage for data re-use and update
- Mitigates the effect of staff turnover and individual memory loss
- Provides documentation of data sources and quality

Helps the user to understand the data:

- Provides consistency in terminology
- Focuses on key elements of data
- Helps the user to determine the data's fitness for use
- Facilitates data transfer and interpretation by new users

Enables discovery

- Provides flexibility in searching to support interdisciplinary usage

Limits Liability: it can prevent data from being used inappropriately or provides protection if the data is inappropriately used.

Evidence of prudent data stewardship: an organization that takes the time to create and maintain quality metadata will also most likely develop quality, clean data.

Reduces workload associated with questions about data: many of a users basic questions can be answered through the metadata.

THE DOWNLOAD PROCESS

The download process is as simple as using the search and or the browse function to find a dataset that you would like to download.

After you have found your datasets, you can simply click the download button, and select which of the three supported file types you would like to download your data in. You can choose to download the data as a spreadsheet (CSV), shapefile, or a KML file.

After selecting which file format you want, you will be prompted to select a location to download the dataset to. The downloading process automatically compresses the file into a zipped format in order to make it as fast as possible. All you must do from here is unzip the file, and it is ready for your personal use.