

Mike Spencer

mikerspencer.com
spencer.mike.r@gmail.com

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

PHD IN SNOW HYDROLOGY
June 2016

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

BSC IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
June 2004

LINKS

Blog: [scottishsnow](http://scottishsnow.com)
Twitter: [@MikeRSpencer](https://twitter.com/MikeRSpencer)
LinkedIn: [mikerspencer](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mikerspencer)
StackExchange: [mikerspencer](https://stackoverflow.com/users/mikerspencer)

MEMBERSHIP

Royal Statistical Society
Society of Research Software Engineers
EdinbR user group convener
Software and data carpentry trainer

SKILLS

COMPUTING

Operating systems:

Linux (Debian based) • Microsoft
Windows

Programming:

R • SQL • \LaTeX • Git • Bash • HTML

Spatial:

QGIS • GRASS • ArcGIS • MapInfo Pro

Other:

Microsoft/Libre Office • Desktop
publishing, e.g. Scribus

DATA

Types:

Grids (e.g. satellite): NetCDF, rasters,
hdf, images • SQL/databases • Time
series • Numeric • Categorical (e.g.
social) • Surveys • Qualitative/text

Abilities:

Mining/extraction • Wrangling/munging
• Management • Quality assurance •
Repeatability • Exploration • Analysis •
Modelling: statistics/physically
based/machine learning • Visualisation •
Forecasting • Interpretation • Insight

ABOUT

OVERVIEW

Mike is a research data scientist. Open access to data and methods is important for transparency and equality and he helps enable this by encouraging open source software use and publication of open data. Mike enjoys diverse challenges and has worked in the public, private, academic and third sectors, giving him the edge in situations that require quick learning and adaptability.

Mike supports an economics and social science research group. His work involves linking and analysing quantitative and qualitative data, to provide insight for government policy. He helps colleagues with expert data advice on scaling workflows and visualisation, and runs internal and external training sessions on databases, programming, GIS and other tools.

INTERESTS

- Repurposing existing data to answer real-world questions.
- Understanding spatial dimensions of business problems.
- Using data science methods to improve workflows.
- Promotion of open source.
- Data literacy for all.

SKILLS PORTFOLIO

DATA ANALYSIS

- To improve resilience and efficiency in the beef industry, Mike is using social network analysis to interpret millions of location-based interactions across Scotland. This work will be used by the Scottish Government to develop a replacement for the EU common agricultural policy and [explores farmer interactions, economic value-chains and efficiency metrics](#).
- In 2018 Mike analysed the social and economic benefits of hill farming. This combined open and national datasets. For example environmental, like land-cover and elevation, along with population and agricultural census. [Writing code in R and GRASS GIS](#) he used machine learning to classify landuse.

DATA VISUALISATION

- [This interactive map](#) shows the shortest road distances between 1.6 million GB postcodes and the closest train station. This analysis uses Ordnance Survey OpenData and led to [subsequent projects with the National Centre for Resilience](#).
- Mike's blog contains many examples of data visualisation. He recently used a [bump chart to help explain 65 years of voting patterns in Westminster elections](#).

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

- Mike developed and co-hosted a [data visualisation workshop](#) on behalf of the Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutes.
- During the 2018 DataFest Mike led a project to teach [network analysis using R](#). He ran workshops attended by the public, private and third sectors.
- On Joining SRUC, Mike conducted a service review of data capability. This assessed the maturity of culture, skills, leadership and infrastructure. The work made a number of recommendations which Mike has been leading.

OUTPUT

ARTICLES (SELECTED)

(Click titles for links, where available)

Pohle, I., Helliwell, R., Aube, C., Gibbs, S., Spencer, M. & Spezia, L., [Citizen science evidence from the past century shows that Scottish rivers are warming](#), Science of The Total Environment, **2019**, 659, p53-65.

Spencer, M. & Thomson, S., [Scottish hill farming score by agricultural parishes \[Data set\]](#), Zenodo, **2018**.

Ge J., Polhill J.G., Matthews K.B., Miller D.G. & Spencer M., [Not one Brexit: How local context and social processes influence policy analysis](#), PLOS ONE, **2018**, 13(12): e0208451.

Spencer, M., [Snow Survey of Great Britain: transcribed data for Scotland, 1945 to 2007](#), NERC Environmental Information Data Centre, **2016**.

Spencer, M. & Essery, R., [Scottish snow cover dependence on the North Atlantic Oscillation index](#), Hydrology Research, **2016**.

Spencer, M., Essery, R., Chambers, L. & Hogg, S., [The Historical Snow Survey of Great Britain: Digitised Data for Scotland](#), Scottish Geographical Journal, **2014**, 130, p252-265.

TALKS (SELECTED)

[Mapping access to services to estimate community resilience](#), Edina geoforum, Mar 2020

[Cartography with R and QGIS, which to choose?](#), FOSS4GUK, Sep 2019

[Predicting snowmelt with R](#), Royal Statistical Society, Apr 2017

[Snow, R and keeping people safe](#), EARL, Sep 2016

[Reanalysis of Scottish mountain snow](#), EUBAP seminar, Mar 2016

[Scottish snow cover and the North Atlantic Oscillation](#), British Hydrological Society (BHS) symposium, Sep 2014

POSTERS (SELECTED)

[Beef efficiency - finishing systems.](#), RESAS end of year, Sep 2020

[Snowmelt frequency in a mountainous, temperate, maritime environment](#), International conference on alpine meteorology, Sep 2015

[Snow survey of Great Britain: digitised data for Scotland](#), BHS symposium, Sep 2014

ZENODO (FULL)

Browse all Mike's uploads to the open science platform, [Zenodo](#). These include code, datasets, posters, presentations and graphics.

EXPERIENCE

INDEPENDENT DATA SCIENCE | CONSULTANT

Aug 2020 - ongoing | Midlothian, Scotland

- Client facing data science support for UK Government comprehensive spending review.
- Designed data architecture and built ETL workflow.
- Development support for interactive dashboard used by the Joint Funds Unit.

AGRIMETRICS | EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM - DATA SPECIALIST

Aug 2018 - ongoing | Rothamsted, England

- Provide data oversight for the UK's leading agri-food data science centre.
- Convened sessions between Agrimetrics, SRUC and Scottish Government on crop mapping from remotely sensed data.
- Represent the interests of SRUC at Agrimetrics.

SRUC | RESEARCH DATA SCIENTIST

Jan 2017 - ongoing | Edinburgh, Scotland

- Devised data strategy for research group.
- Expert data advice to 45 researchers and students.
- Data linking and analysis of: animal movements, qualitative surveys, spatial data, environmental data, and others.
- Developed and ran internal and external data skills training series.
- Briefing executives and board on data challenges and solutions.
- Writing journal and policy briefing papers.
- Producing high-quality visualisations, e.g. web-apps, leaflets, and posters.

HOSTELLING SCOTLAND | BOARD NOMINATIONS ADVISOR

Jun 2017 - June 2019 | Edinburgh, Scotland

- Process development and governance for board member recruitment.
- CV appraisal, interview and recommendation of potential board members.

SCOTTISH YOUTH HOSTELS ASSOCIATION | DIRECTOR

Jun 2016 - June 2017 | Edinburgh, Scotland

- Advertised, interviewed and appointed a new CEO.
- Responsible for governance of SYHA.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH | PHD

Sep 2011 - Jun 2016 | Edinburgh, Scotland

- Stochastic time series snow modelling and model build.
- Extreme value statistics of snow cover and melt.
- Statistical modelling of snow cover related to atmospheric circulation (NAO).
- Analysis of remote sensing veracity using machine learning.
- Data mining of historic Snow Survey of Great Britain dataset.

HALCROW GROUP LTD | SENIOR HYDROLOGIST

Sep 2008 - July 2011 | Edinburgh, Scotland

- Project lead for Scottish hydrological work.
- Training and mentoring of staff.
- Hydrological, hydraulic and GIS modelling and analysis.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES | HYDROLOGIST

Dec 2005 - Sep 2008 | Haverfordwest, Wales

- Extreme value statistics and physically-based river modelling.
- Data management of flood risk assessments, models and spatial data.

PERSONAL

Mike has been based on the outskirts of Edinburgh since Autumn 2008. He balances his work commitments with a young family, spending a day a week with his son. When he's not at a computer Mike can be found on a bike, mountain, up a ladder doing DIY or gigging as a trombonist.