

Data Journalism Tip Sheet

You've taken the Citizen Journalist class and you want to know what to do next. One way you can become a citizen journalist is to use public data to create a story.

What is Data Journalism?

Data Journalism is when we use public data and statistics to tell a story. With the development of modern technology and an increase to access to information in a digital format --- it is now possible to extract more information from public data.

For example, you could take the crime statistics for your community and create a map with a color code of low to high crime areas. Once the map is developed you can begin to see if there are any trends and areas that need to be better policed. Is

Using simple online tools and available public data sets any one of us can become "data journalists."

Why is Data Journalism?

- Gives proof and validity to stories
- Keep elected officials honest
- Helps tell richer stories
- Identify trends that might otherwise be hidden
- It creates a more interesting
- Some people react more to visual stories

What type of data can you use?

- Government Budget breakdowns
- Educational Test scores
- Toxic sites
- Affordable housing units
- Census estimates
- Tax breaks
- Sandy statistics
- Cell phone bills of Municipal Officials

Citizen Journalist "Data Journalism Tip Sheet"

STEP 1: Obtain the Data

Government agencies are slowly adapting to providing data in excel format. Always try to obtain information in a readable format, if not, you may have to resort to entering in the data manually.

Most of these agencies offer valuable data sets in excel format.

- NJ state government (yourmoney.gov, NJSP, DOE, DCA, DOT, DEP, DOH)
- Federal government (DOE, HUD, CDC, SBA, EPA, fedstats)
- Census Bureau
- Campaign Finance Reports (ELEC and FEC)
- Public interest groups
- Municipal Clerk
- School Business Administrator

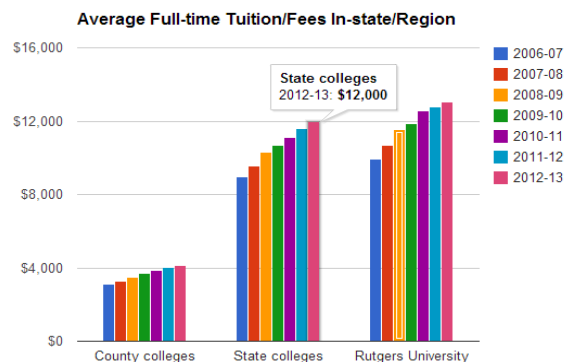
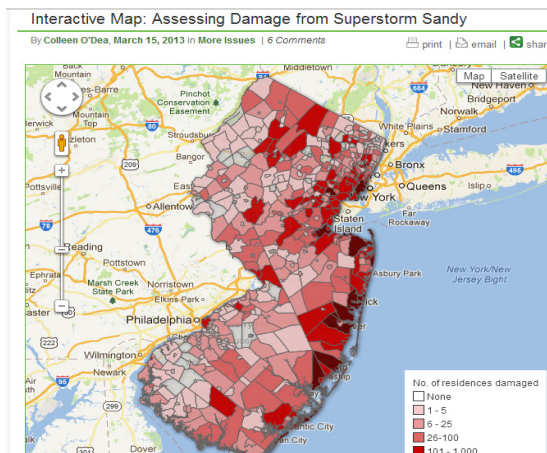
Step 2: Using online tools to process the information

There are a ton of free resources available online. One great place to start is Google Docs, they have:

- Storage
- Tables
- Spreadsheets
- Charts

EXAMPLES:

Google Fusion Maps:



Source: NJ Office of Higher Education.

OTHER TOOLS:

Depending on your skill level and interest in learning, there are many other tools, including lots that are free:

- Tableau Public
- Many Eyes
- Vidi
- QGIS
- FreeDive

Step 3: Follow the Expert’s Advice

- If you don’t know spreadsheets, learn.
- Search for help/tips online.
- Join IRE and NICAR listserv and ask for help.
- Be dogged in your pursuit of data. File OPRA Requests if necessary.
- Give yourself plenty of time when first getting started. Don’t do it on deadline. You WILL make mistakes.

TIP: Not ready to become a Data Journalism Pro? Take a first step and contribute to a Community Mapping Project. As the old adage goes, “knowledge is power.” It can be incredibly powerful to map out what resources are available to the community. A simple mapping project can unearth hundreds of “stories” like whether there is access to healthy food, recreational facilities, or open space.

STEP 4: Get Social

- ✓ **Facebook.** Did you know pictures are the most popular items people share on Facebook? Share your chart or map on Facebook and watch it go viral
- ✓ **Twitter.** Twitter is another great way to share your work with a broader audience. You can use hashtags using the number symbol (i.e. #NewJersey) to start a conversation with other twitter users.
- ✓ **YouTube.** You can create a video blog or “vlog,” to share news via videos.

NEED MORE HELP? ONLINE RESOURCES AND TUTORIALS:

- Data viz tools:
[http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9214755/Chart and image gallery 30 free tools for data visualization and analysis](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9214755/Chart_and_image_gallery_30_free_tools_for_data_visualization_and_analysis)
- IRE, including NICAR: www.ire.org
- Poynter Institute:<http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/>
- Google charts tutorial: <http://web.appstorm.net/how-to/creating-charts-with-google-docs/>
- Fusion tutorial: <http://www.computerworld.com/slideshow/detail/68971#slide1>