Building a Redistricting Database

By Kimball Brace
Election Data Services, Inc.
Since 1979, more than half the nation has been helped by Election Data Services in redistricting

- Compiled extensive databases of election results and census demographics for redistricting in more than half the nation over past 4 apportionments
- Testified in more than 75 court cases, many concerning racial analysis of data
The Election Process – From a data prospective

Total Population

Voting Age Population

Citizen Voting Age Population

Registration

Turnout

Votes for President

Other Statewide Offices

Congressional

State Legislature

Composition of each Stepping Stone, varies by:
- Demographics
- Geography
- Time

Stepping Stones of the Election Process Play Important Part of Redistricting
Redistricting Data Cube

Type of Data
- Spatial
- Tabular

Census
- TIGER/Line® Files (Now Yearly Release)
- Other Boundaries
- Redistricting Summary (PL 94-171) & ACS Files
- Other Demographic Files?

Political
- Precinct and Electoral District Boundaries
- Election Returns and Voting Statistics
- Geocoded Voter Regis Files?

Source of data

@Election Data Services, Inc.

Los Angeles NCSL Powerpoint for 8/1/2018
What Do you Need to Collect?

For Every County/Township in your State,
For Every Precinct in each Jurisdiction,
For Each Election:

1. Number of Registered Voters
   1. By party, if relevant
2. Number of people who Turned Out
3. Number of votes cast for each candidate in relevant elections
   1. All State-wide contests
   2. Any districted offices you’ll be redrawing
      1. Congressional
      2. State Senate
      3. State House
   3. Any relevant Referendum, particularly state-wide
   4. Any relevant local contests
   5. Any contest with a minority candidate
Election Data Considerations

1. Primary or General Election Only
2. How far back in time
   1. 2010 Tea Party election
      1. Different precinct configuration likely
3. Need Precinct Maps
   1. Precinct #4 moved across town between elections. Not always covering same voters
4. Absentee votes
   1. Allocated to/counted by precinct?
   2. Only tallied by ballot style (collection of precincts, do you know what they were)?
   3. Increased number over time
5. Vote Centers
   1. Data not delineated by precinct?
   2. Increased number over time

Don’t Assume Returns are All in One Place Nor that they have been keypunched
Examples of Issues
Some of the block boundaries are meaningless, and some bisect houses.
Very large block encompassing houses from multiple neighborhoods, not in close proximity to each other.
Past Problems

40 Years of redistricting in states

Never had good tools to see what it looks like on the ground.

Maps were stick figures
For 2020

• Make sure you have fast computer connections
• Make sure you have lots of disk space
• Start now, don’t wait.
Lessons Learned the Hard Way

• Have to plan your redistricting process as if you’ll ultimately be in court.
  − Are you prepared to turn over your data to other side?
  − Will it withstand scrutiny?
  − Does everything add up to what was certified?
    • Document discrepancies

Database building –

The most important activity of the whole process

• An error here, can sink your whole ship
Thank you

Kimball Brace
President
Election Data Services, Inc.
6171 Emerywood Court
Manassas, VA 20112
(703-580-7267 or 202-789-2004)
KBrace@electiondataservices.com or KBrace@aol.com
www.electiondataservices.com