Using GIS to Hunt for Easter Eggs

While writing GIS software is a big business and no laughing (or trivial) matter, ever since the early days of computer software programs, the authors have displayed their sense of humor, and creativity, by placing little “hidden features or Easter eggs” in their coding. Sometimes these hidden features would display the coders names when a special key sequence or click-pattern was detected. Other times, hidden features, likened to Easter eggs, would be revealed with key combinations. In this month’s column, we highlight five GIS Tips & Tricks that are easy to miss.

**Tip #1:**
(From Carly Bradshaw)

Carly does a lot of line-vector editing and discovered that when in an active editing session in ArcGIS, if you hover over a line and toggle the “V” key on the keypad, all of the vertices appear/disappear, as below:

Pressing/releasing the V-key toggles the vertices on and off but only when hovering the cursor near the line (or polygon) being edited.

**Tip #2:**
(From Savannah Carter)

Like Carly, Savannah performs a lot of vector editing, and found that she often forgets about “Exploding Multipart Feature”. As with most tools, there are multiple ways to enable the “Explode Multipart Feature”. The tool is available in the ArcToolbox | Data Management, and on the Advanced Editing toolbar as:

Of course, the tool is found in the Advanced Editing Customize menu and can be added to any toolbar.
Tip #3
(from Al Karlin)

While I am at it, you may have noticed that the size of the icons on the Advanced Editing Toolbar above is larger than the standard display. That is not a result of me enlarging a picture with some digital Paint program. For those of us with aging eyes or very high-resolution computer displays, there is an option to increase the size of ALL of the icons on the Esri toolbars. While this option is not exactly hidden, it is not very obvious either.

To increase the size of the icons, from the Main Toolbar use the Customize | Customize Mode (or double-click anywhere on the gray space on the interface) to open the “Customize” dialog. Then click on the Options tab and select “Large Icons.”

Tip #4
(from Todd Waldorf)

Todd works with many GIS software packages at Dewberry and has contributed some other Tips & Tricks to this column. While editing vector files, Todd finds that zooming in and out with the mouse wheel is sometimes too coarse for his needs. Todd discovered that holding the <CTRL> key down while wheeling will provide finer control over the zoom increment.

Tip #5
(from Keith Patterson)

Keith spends a lot of time reviewing ortho-imagery and associated products as a final quality check prior to delivery to clients. While this tip is not technically an “Easter egg”, Keith found that when reviewing 4-band multichannel imagery, it is really easy to “switch” between bands with the Layer Properties menu.

In the Esri ArcGIS Software, the natural color image is rendered by assigning Red to Band 1, Green to Band 2, and Blue to Band 3, as below:

To render the multi-band image as a false-color Infrared image, use the dropdown arrows in the Layers | Symbology tab and assign the infrared, usually, Band 4 to Red, leave Green assigned to Band 2, and assign red to Band 3 as below:

Of course, click “OK” to apply the new band/color assignments.

Easter eggs can be found in all software packages. Please feel free to share yours with us. Send your questions, comments, and tips to GISTT@ASPRS.org.

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