

ATLAS REVIEW

Interactive Atlas of Georgia.

Thomas W. Hodler, Neal Lawson, Howard A. Schretter, and Jeffrey Torguson. Athens, Georgia: Institute of Community and Area Development, University of Georgia, 1994. \$89.

System requirements: IBM or compatible 386 computer with VGA graphics monitor, mouse, and 10 MB available hard disk space

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The Interactive Atlas of Georgia comes packaged in an attractive box featuring a color, two-channel Landsat MSS mosaic of the state. The package contains the three-disk atlas, a brief 28-page tutorial, a 54-page technical manual, and a handy quick reference card. Minimum system requirements for the atlas include an IBM or compatible personal computer with 10 MB available hard disk space, DOS 3.0 or later, 512K RAM, VGA color graphics, and a high density 3.5" disk drive. The atlas also supports a Microsoft or compatible mouse (or pointing device) and an HP Laserjet Series III printer. Installation instructions are well-written and easily followed from the technical manual. I tested the atlas on two separate systems: a desktop IBM-compatible 486-33 using MS-DOS 5.0 and a color notebook 486-50 using MS-DOS 6.2.

When the atlas is opened, the user is presented with a cover page containing a number of selections arranged in a "tool bar" across the top of the screen. This first level of the menu system includes several selections. These include:

- HELP - Brief and not indexed or searchable.
- CHAPTERS - Allows the user to select one of several map screens organized around nineteen thematic headings such as "agriculture," "education," or "crime."
- SCREENS - Allows the user to browse any of the map pages independent of the chapters.
- DATA - Produces a formatted county report, listing 234 statistics for any one of Georgia's 159 counties.

Both levels of the menu system are reminiscent in "look and feel" of many early DOS applications with fixed pop-up menus and a clumsy scrolling capability. Fortunately, the user need only use this menu briefly to move to the second (and final) level of the menu.

The second level of the menu system is reached either by selecting a screen from the "chapters" selection in the first menu or by going directly to a screen in the "screen" selection. When a screen (analogous to an atlas page) is open, the user can control various parameters or move to other screens using a fixed "tool bar" at the top of the screen. The "tool bar" might have been better located at the bottom or side of the screen. In its present location, the user must turn it on and off to page through the screens in order to view the titles. The functions contained in this menu include:

- HELP - Again brief and not indexed.
- WHERE - Presents a scrollable list of counties in a fixed pop-up box. Selecting a county from the list highlights that county and pops-up a small box with the statistic for that county. The user can also point to any county in the body of any map and obtain a similar result, although I didn't like the offset method of highlighting the counties on the two displays I used to evaluate the system.
- REPORTS - Produces a formatted report of counties by county order, data order, or data class and allows the user to view or save the report. Unfortunately, this function does not allow the user to select file formats for saved reports that might be usable by an external spreadsheet, database, or thematic mapping package or include FIPS codes as a field. This is particularly annoying given the absence of any internal graphics capabilities of the atlas.
- REGIONS - A useful tool that allows the creation of user-defined regions composed of two or more counties that can be saved and processed separately.
- QUERY - Allows the user to identify counties that meet a user-defined range criterion. The user can also define ranges on multiple maps to produce a report of counties that meet multiple criteria.
- CITIES - A pop-up menu allows the user to locate a city in the selected map. The user can also display a county seat or all the cities in a selected county. The utility of this function is diminished by the absence of a zoom capability.
- INFO - This function will pop-up a scrollable text box that contains additional information about the maps contained

on that screen. The user can also display or save the references used to compile the maps on the screen.

- **PRINT** - Allows the user to print state and region maps or reports.
- **MISC** - This selection contains a "county learn game" that prompts the user with a randomly selected county name and allows 10 seconds to point to the named county. This can be quite challenging with Georgia's 159 counties, and as a new arrival, I scored poorly on several tries.
- **ARROW KEYS** - The user can page through the screens one at a time and, since they are organized by chapter, generally find related information. This is one of the most annoying aspects of the atlas. To move directly to another screen, which may be distant from your current view, the user must either use the bookmark system (20 function keys activate "bookmarks," which are active only for the current session) or move back into the main menu to scan the lists of chapters and screens. When the user selects one of the arrow keys to "page" to the next screen, the display "blacks out" for about a second, providing a distracting visual jolt.

The atlas was intended as a replacement for *The Atlas of Georgia*, a hardbound 286 page reference work published by the University of Georgia in 1986. The designers of *The Interactive Atlas of Georgia* have produced a useful tool for introducing K-12 students to some of the concepts of cartography, geography, computers, and a suite of information describing

the state and its people. As such, it should be a practical tool for high schools and colleges. The atlas falls short of the mark, however, in attempting to provide a serious research tool for the more advanced student or the university library.

In a cartographic sense, this atlas presents its portrait of Georgia in a rather inflexible fashion, perhaps a surprising characteristic for those who might expect a more "interactive" product. In general, the planimetry of the maps appear to be fairly detailed, although in several instances, notably on the pages in the "Physical Geography" chapter, there is an obvious misregistration between physical features and political boundaries. However, this only becomes apparent if one is using the "point and click" method of pulling up county outlines, so it's not terrifically obvious unless one is wondering why a particular boundary doesn't correspond with a particular river. The color selections used on many of the maps appear to be inappropriate and the user has no control over color selection. Likewise, class range selection is fixed and inconsistent, and there is no discussion of the scheme (e.g., quantile, natural break) used in each case. In other instances, choropleth maps are used inappropriately to represent raw values not equalized for population. The final effect is to approximate the act of paging through a paper atlas without much of the "interactivity" we might expect.

In summary, *The Interactive Atlas of Georgia* can be a useful tool for K-12 teachers or students, presenting a large volume of statistical information principally aggregated at the county level in a relatively easy-to-use format. Serious users may be disappointed by the graphical user interface, the cartographic inflexibility of the

system, the lack of any internal graphic system, and the limited options for hard or soft copy output. In addition, there will certainly be many Macintosh users (who haven't sprung for the Power Mac yet) that will "pine" for a chance to access the atlas and its information. The designers have done a creditable job in replacing the hardbound atlas with a PC version. Perhaps, the next edition will improve in terms of interface, output, and interactivity. □

SOFTWARE REVIEW

EASY IMAGE

Version tested: 2.0. From Penmatrics, Inc., 225 S.W. Madison, Corvallis OR 97333. Phone (503) 757-3076. Fax: (503) 752-2027. \$595.

System requirements: The program will run on any 386 desktop running Windows 3.0 or higher, but a 486 machine is preferable. A minimum of 4MB RAM and 3MB of hard disk space are needed, along with a VGA 256-color high resolution video card and monitor. The program was evaluated on a Gateway 486-DX4 100-MHz system with 16 MB of memory and a Mach 64 video card with 2 MB VRAM.

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EASY IMAGE is a Windows-based image analysis package designed to meet the needs of two diverse groups. For general users with elementary needs, the program provides a complete set of tools for image display and enhancement. An add-on program, the Software Developer's Kit (SDK, \$695),