Creating Charts and Maps with ManyEyes

By Jeff South | Journalism Professor & Newsroom Trainer | Virginia Commonwealth University

Many Eyes is a free data visualization tool created by IBM. You can create an account at http://www-958.ibm.com/software/data/cognos/manyeyes/

After you log in, click on “Upload a data set” (on the left, under “Participate”). Then, open your spreadsheet in Excel; select the data you want to visualize; copy it to your clipboard; and paste it into the ManyEyes window.

You usually want Column 1 to list the names of the items that you’ll display in your chart, and Column 2 to be the most important numbers.

Then, fill out information under “Tell us about your data” and click “Create.” Now your data set is online. Click “Visualize” to create a graphic. ManyEyes presents a range of possibilities (and explains how to choose a particular visualization type). For our comparison of student loan default rates, we might select a bubble chart. So click on that option. ManyEyes produces this graphic:

Give your chart a name (it can be the same name as your data set. Then click “Publish.”

Then, click “Share this,” and you’ll get the embed code. I usually embed a “live visualization of the “Big” size. Online, it looks like this (and it links to the data):

It’s also easy to create maps with ManyEyes. All you need is the state names or country names in the first column. You can even map Virginia localities (counties and independent cities). Make sure you have the state name (“Virginia”) in the first column, and the locality name in the second.
Delete the word “County” from the locality names. Also, delete the word “City” except from: Charles City, James City, Bedford City, Richmond City and Roanoke City. When you paste your data into the ManyEyes window, it should look like this:

Click “Create,” then “Visualize.” Select the US County Map:

ManyEyes will ask you which column contains the county names and which one contains the state names:

After you provide that information, you can zoom in to Virginia and position the state in the display window. Give your visualization a title, and click “Publish.” Click on “Share this” to get the embed code.

Besides shading each locality to reflect the data, you also can use bubbles. Above on the right is how such a visualization might appear on a website.