Using ArcExplorer™

(Windows Prerelease)

Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.

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Introducing ArcExplorer™

Welcome to ArcExplorer, an Internet-enabled spatial data viewer from ESRI that will change the way you work with GIS data. ArcExplorer is a new, easy-to-use application that displays and queries locally stored GIS data. Connected to the Internet (or private intranet), ArcExplorer also becomes a Web client capable of browsing and downloading actual vector data in industry-standard Shapefile format. Once data has been downloaded, ArcExplorer can be disconnected and the data used in local (standalone) mode.

What you can do with ArcExplorer

As a standalone desktop application, ArcExplorer is a complete, easy-to-use GIS data viewer. With ArcExplorer you can:

- View and query ESRI Shapefiles, ARC/INFO coverages, and Spatial Database Engine (SDE) layers

- Identify, locate, and query geographic and attribute data

- Use powerful symbolization tools to create thematic maps based on attributes contained in the database

- Use standard pan and zoom tools to navigate your data

- Display all the popular image file formats including JPEG, BMP, TIFF, and others

With ArcExplorer connected to the World Wide Web, you can also:

- Connect to web sites to view and query GIS data remotely

- Download vector data (in Shapefile format) from enabled web sites for use as locally-stored GIS data in ArcExplorer or any other ESRI GIS software product

Installing ArcExplorer

There are two ways to install ArcExplorer. If you're on the web, and your browser is configured with the InstallFromTheWeb Plugin, click on the Download icon and follow the instructions . If you downloaded the file named aesetup.exe, or got ArcExplorer on a CD, you can install it by double-clicking aesetup.exe and following the on-screen instructions.

Note: If you are currently using any version of ESRI's Map Objects in a development environment, you will need to either reinstall the MapObjects onto your system or re-register all components in the installation directory.

During the install procedure, you'll be prompted to select the type of installation you want. The following table describes the three options:

Setup option	Installation components
Typical	Installs all the components
Compact	Installs only the basic application files (not the Internet client)
Custom	Allows you to choose which components to install
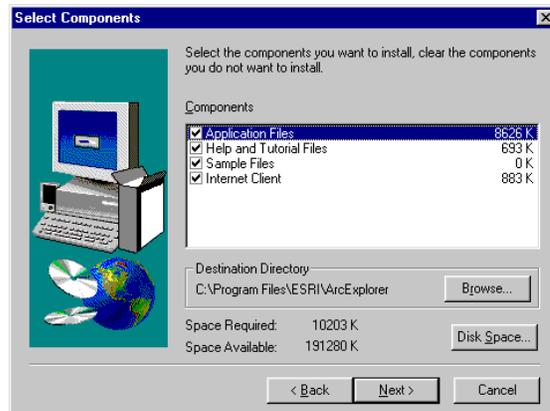
To complete the installation:

1. Click finish to accept the license agreement.

2. Follow the on screen instructions to complete the set up.
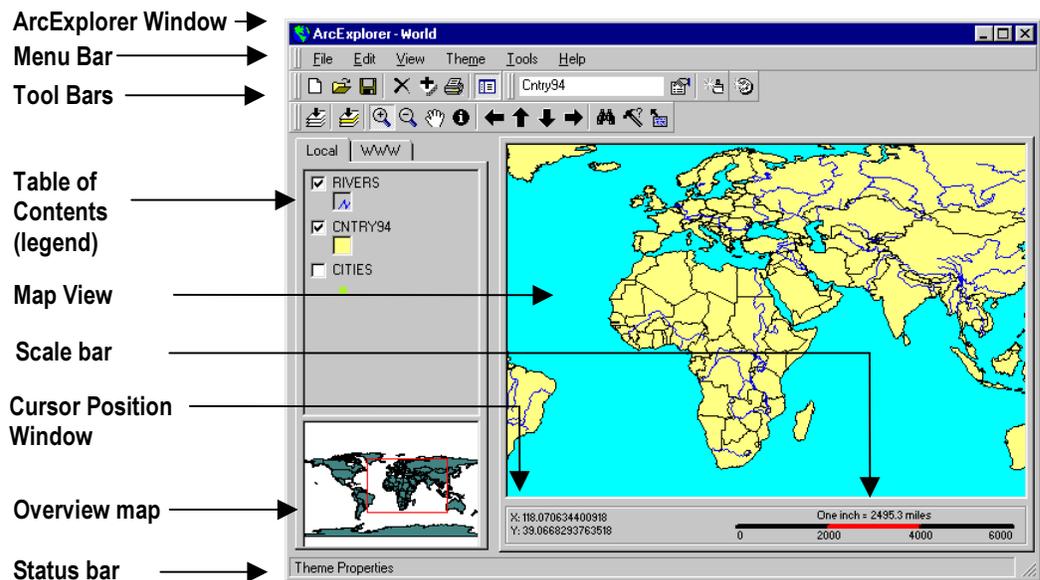
Hardware and software requirements

The list below provides the minimum requirements for installing and running ArcExplorer:

•   Computer—An industry-standard personal computer with at least an 80486 processor or higher Intel-based microprocessor.

•   Operating System—Windows 95 or Windows NT 4.0 or higher

•   Approximately 10 megabytes of disk space and at least 12 megabytes of RAM

ArcExplorer User Interface

This section describes the ArcExplorer user interface.

ArcExplorer Window →
Menu Bar
Tool Bars

**Table of
Contents
(legend)**

Map View

Scale bar

**Cursor Position
Window**

Overview map

Status bar

ArcExplorer Window: The complete application interface.

Menu Bar and Tool Bars: Used to access all the functions of ArcExplorer.

Table of Contents: Displays all the layers of data as *themes*. Use the WWW tab to access Internet data. The Table of Contents also serves as a legend describing the data.

Map View: Where the map draws. ESRI Shapefiles (files with the .shp extension) can be dragged and dropped straight from a Windows directory into a Map View.

Cursor Position Window: Shows the geographic position of the cursor on the Map View in decimal degrees.

Scale Bar: Displays the scale of the current Map View.

Overview map: Displays an overview map showing the full extent of your data, with a red box covering the area displayed in the Map View.

Status Bar: Shows context-sensitive help messages on the left and lists the current active theme on the right.

The Tool Bars

Most of ArcExplorer's functionality is accessible by using the following tools. All of these functions are also available through the Menu Bar. (The tools work in both Local and WWW mode unless indicated otherwise in parentheses).

File/New

Use this tool to open a new ArcExplorer Window. You can open as many ArcExplorer Windows at the same time as you want.

File/Open

Use the File Open tool to open a saved ArcExplorer session (files with .mot extension).

File/Save

Use the File Save command to save an ArcExplorer session.

Clear View (Local mode only)

Press the Clear View tool to remove all themes from the Table of Contents and return to an empty view.

Add Themes

Use Add Themes to add one or more theme(s) to the Table of Contents (and Map View).

Print

Use Print to output the Map View to a preformatted map layout on your default printer.

Toggle

Press the Toggle tool to switch to Explorer View. In Explorer View, the Table of Contents and Overview Map disappear, resulting in an expanded Map View.

Theme Properties (Local mode only)

Press the Theme Properties tool to open a dialog box where you can set the display characteristics of the active theme.

Clear Thematic Classification (Local mode only)

Press Clear Thematic Classification to remove any classifications from the active theme.

Clear Selection Highlight

Clears any highlighted features in the Map View.

Full View

Use the Full View tool to zoom the Map View to the full extent of all the themes.

Zoom to Active Themes (Local mode only)

Use the Zoom to Active Themes tool to zoom to the extent of only the active theme.

Zoom In

Use this to zoom in on the position you click or the box you drag on a view.

Zoom Out

Use the Zoom Out tool to zoom out from the position you click or the area you drag on a view.

Pan

Pan the Map View by dragging it in any direction with the Pan tool.

Identify

Use the Identify tool to pull up the attributes of features in the active theme. Click on a feature in the Map View; an Identify Results window will pop up.

Pan West

Pan the Map to the West.
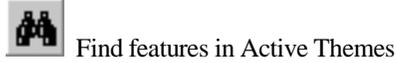
Pan South

Pan the Map View to the South.

Pan North

Pan the Map View to the North.

Pan East

Pan the Map View to the East.

Find features in Active Themes

Use this tool to find specific features in one or more themes. When a feature is found, ArcExplorer will let you highlight it, zoom to it, or pan the Map View so the feature is centered.

Query

Press Query to bring up a dialog box where you can construct a query against the active theme. When the query is executed, the features matching the query are highlighted and the Map View pans so they are centered.

Map Tips

Brings up a dialog box that allows you to select a field. The data for this field will then be displayed for each feature on the map as the user moves the cursor on the screen in Local Mode. In WWW Mode, Map Tips works with a right mouse click.
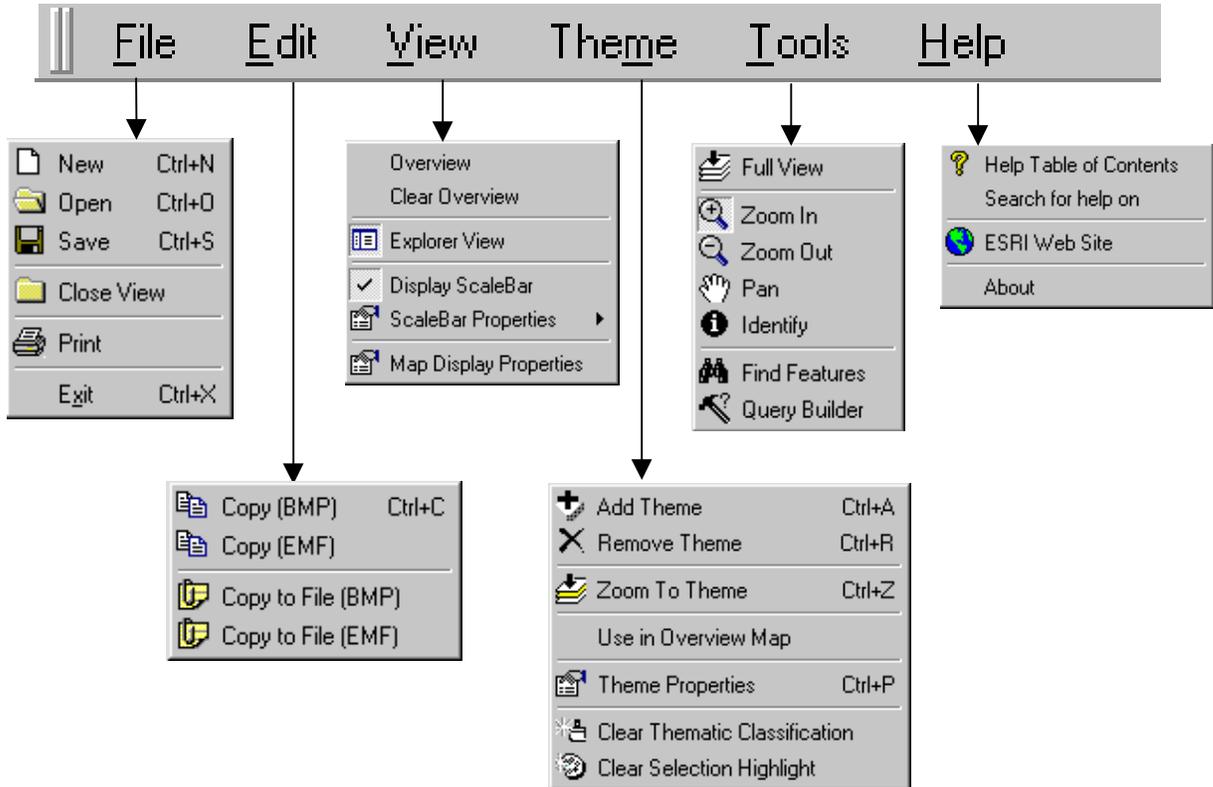
Cancel WWW request (WWW mode only)

Use this tool to cancel a request sent for a download of WWW data.

Retrieve Vector Data (WWW mode only)

Use this to download a Shapefile of the active theme and attribute data.

Menus

All of the functions found on the Tool bars are also accessible by pulling down the Menu Bar. Use the shortcut keys listed next to the menu choices for direct access to those functions.

File   Edit   View   Theme   Tools   Help

File menu:
- New   Ctrl+N
- Open   Ctrl+O
- Save   Ctrl+S
- Close View
- Print
- Exit   Ctrl+X

Edit menu:
- Copy (BMP)   Ctrl+C
- Copy (EMF)
- Copy to File (BMP)
- Copy to File (EMF)

View menu:
- Overview
- Clear Overview
- Explorer View
- ✓ Display ScaleBar
- ScaleBar Properties   ▶
- Map Display Properties

Theme menu:
- Add Theme   Ctrl+A
- Remove Theme   Ctrl+R
- Zoom To Theme   Ctrl+Z
- Use in Overview Map
- Theme Properties   Ctrl+P
- Clear Thematic Classification
- Clear Selection Highlight

Tools menu:
- Full View
- Zoom In
- Zoom Out
- Pan
- Identify
- Find Features
- Query Builder

Help menu:
- Help Table of Contents
- Search for help on
- ESRI Web Site
- About

Using ArcExplorer

This section describes how to use ArcExplorer to: view locally stored GIS data; retrieve GIS data over the Internet or corporate intranet; control the display and classification of your data; work with scale and set up contextual *map tips*; use Overview Maps; find and identify map features; construct queries on your GIS data; generate summary statistics; print your maps; and save your work.

Exploring locally stored data with ArcExplorer

When not connected to the Internet or an intranet, ArcExplorer functions as a standalone data explorer.

To add data to an Explorer view:

1. From the File Menu, choose Add Theme, or click the Add Theme tool to access the Map Contents dialog box.
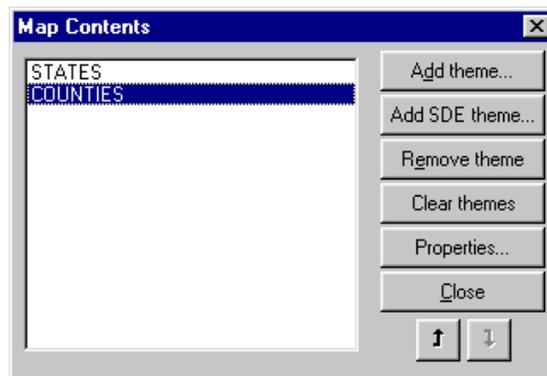
2. To add a locally stored Shapefile, ARC/INFO coverage, or image file to the Map View, press the Add Theme tool.

3. In the Select a file for new theme dialog box, choose the type of file to load from the drop down list.

4. Highlight one or more locally stored files that you wish to load click open.

5. To add an ESRI Spatial Database Engine (SDE) theme, click the Add SDE theme button and fill out the Connect SDE Theme dialog box to connect to an SDE database. You may have to edit the Services file on your PC to access the SDE data set. See the ArcExplorer home page for detailed instructions.

6. You can set an active theme's display properties from the Map Contents or from the Table of Contents.

7. Use the up or down arrow buttons to change the drawing order of the themes.

8. Close the Map Contents dialog box by clicking the close button.

Using ArcExplorer as an Internet client

ArcExplorer WWW access assumes that the user has a valid Win32 Internet connection. ArcExplorer will make a connection using the default parameters as defined in the Windows Registry by the WWW provider software.

ArcExplorer currently has one AE Enabled site available for access and more coming. The URL to use in your connection is: http://nutria.esri.com/scripts/esrimapc .

To add an ArcExplorer web site:

1. In the Table of Contents, click the tab labeled WWW.

2. From the File Menu, choose Add Theme, or click the Add Theme tool ⊞ to access the Add ArcExplorer Web Site dialog box.
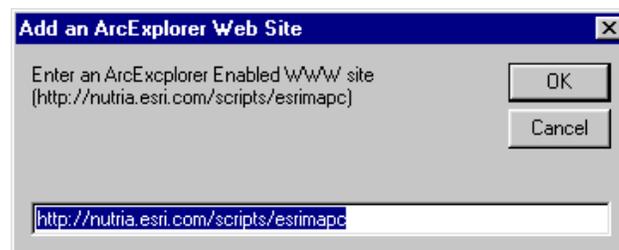

3. Type in the URL (Universal Resource Locator) of the web site you wish to add. (Refer to the ArcExplorer home page for information on how to set up your own map server using ESRI Internet Map Server technology).
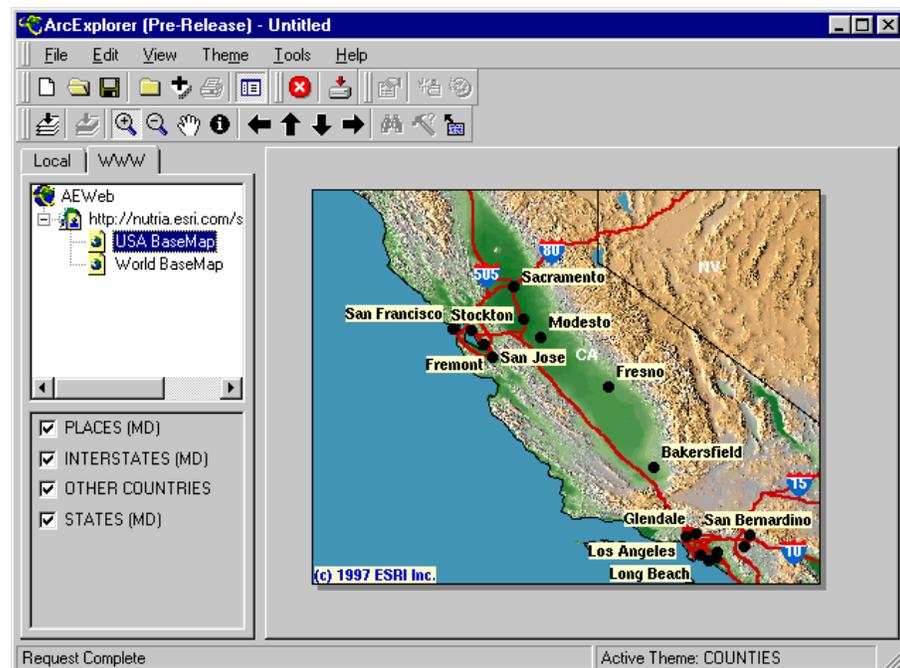
4. The name of the server will show up under AEWeb. Navigate through the directory of available GIS data and double click those themes you want to add to the Explorer view. A Table of Contents listing all the web-based themes will appear below the directory. Use the black and gray arrows to scroll through the list if it extends beyond the Table of Contents window. Like a theme in a Local Table of Contents, a WWW theme can also be made active.

To download vector data from a web site

1. Use the Pan and Zoom tools to display the area you wish to download. By default, ArcExplorer will download only the data showing in the Explorer view. ArcExplorer will download data for all the themes in the table of contents, as long as features exist in the chosen extent. Each theme will be downloaded as a separate Shapefile.

2. Once you're satisfied with the extent, click the Retrieve Vector Data tool ⬇ to bring up the Vector Data Options dialog box.
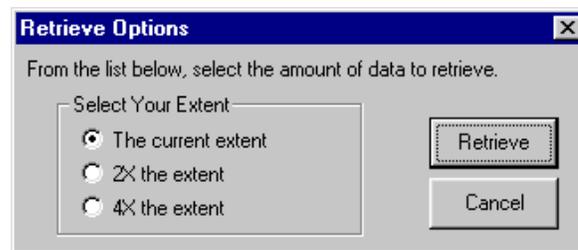

3. Select the amount of vector data you wish to get and press Retrieve. (By default, ArcExplorer will retrieve just the current extent, but you have the option to choose to download from an extent either twice as large or four times as large as the current extent.

4. In the Browse for Folder dialog box, choose the folder where you want the Shapefiles to be stored.

5. ArcExplorer will now start downloading the data. At any time, you can halt the download by pressing the Cancel WWW request tool ⊗.

6. Once ArcExplorer has finished downloading the Shapefile(s) to your local drive, you will be asked if you would like to add the vector data to your local view. If you choose No, the Shapefiles will still be stored at the location where you specified. If you choose Yes, ArcExplorer will automatically toggle to the local table of contents and list the new themes. At this point you can change the display characteristics, perform finds and queries, etc., just like any locally stored vector data.

The ArcExplorer Table of Contents

The ArcExplorer Table of Contents lists all the themes that you currently have loaded into your Map View. The Table of Contents has two modes: Local for managing locally stored databases, and WWW for managing data stored on Web sites. The functions described below work the same in either mode unless stated otherwise.

From the Table of Contents you can:

- Click the check box to the left of each theme's name to turn the theme on or off in the Map View.

- Make a theme active by single clicking its name in the Table of Contents. (Making a theme active tells ArcExplorer which theme you want to classify, query, etc.)

- Change the drawing order by using the left mouse button to drag themes up and down within the Table of Contents

- Double click a theme's name to bring up the theme properties dialog box (Local mode only).

- Use the tiny black and gray arrows to scroll the Table of Contents up and down if there are more themes loaded than can be shown in the Table of Contents.

- Right clicking a theme's name in the Table of Contents brings up the following *theme specific* menu choices (Local mode only):

Right click on a theme in the Local Table of Contents
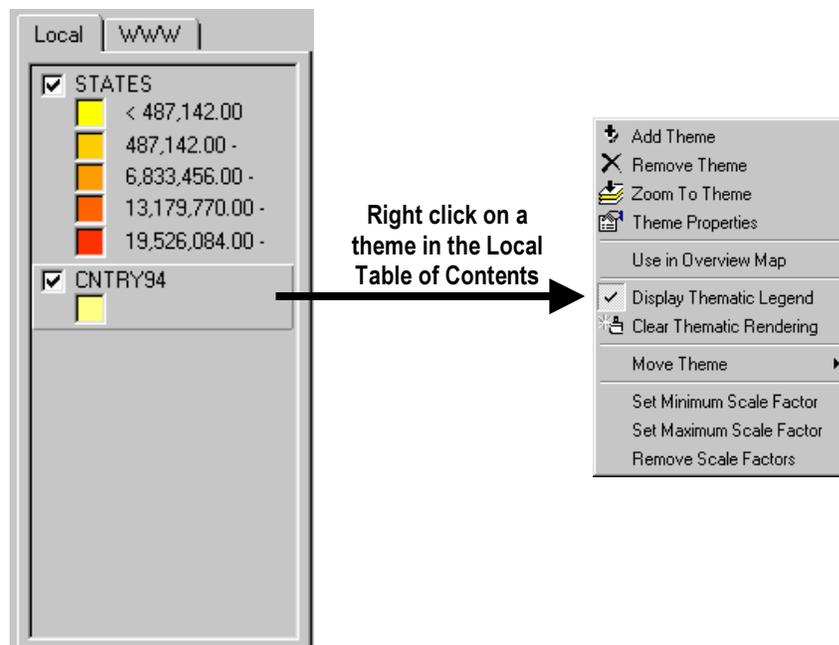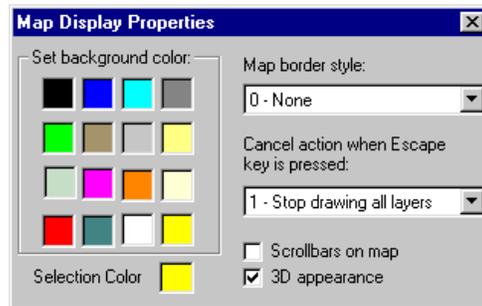
Setting the Map Display Properties

You can control the background color, map outline, scroll bars, and other characteristics of your Explorer view.

To change the Map Display Properties of your Map View

1.   Choose Map Display Properties from the View Menu.


3.   Click a color from the set of colored boxes to change the background color of the Map View.

4.   Choose a Selection Color. This is the color which features found in a query will draw.

5.   Select a Map Border Style. This toggles the Map View border on and off. Most noticeable in 3D mode.

6.   Use the Cancel action when Escape key is pressed to control the screen redraw interrupt. You can set the Escape key to stop drawing all layers, to stop drawing the current layer, or to do nothing.

7.   Click the checkbox Scrollbars on map if you want the Explorer view to include scroll bars at the edge of the map for panning. (This option has no effect on the standard pan and zoom tools.)

8.   Click the checkbox 3D appearance if you want the Explorer view to have a slightly raised (3D) effect.

Rendering tools

The way that your locally stored data is displayed (rendered) in ArcExplorer is controlled through the Theme Properties Dialog window. (In order to render WWW data, you must first download that data to a local Map View.) You can access a Theme's properties by double clicking its name in the Table of Contents. Alternately, you can make the theme active by single clicking it and choose Theme Properties from the Theme Menu, or click the Theme Properties tool 🖼️. The Theme Properties offers four choices for displaying your data: Single Symbol (the default setting, shown below), Value Map, Class Breaks, and Labels.

Single Symbol

The Single Symbol classification displays all the features in the theme with the same color and style.
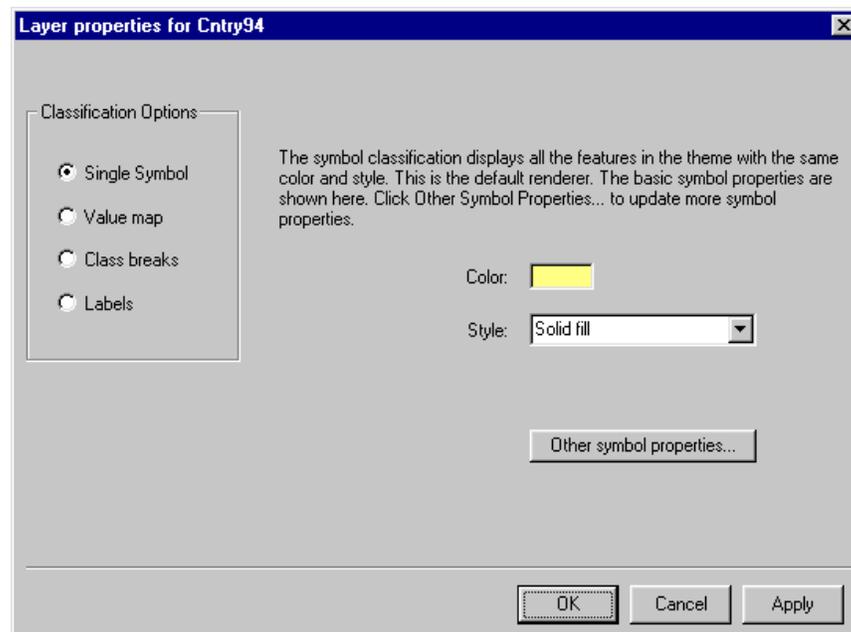

To create a Single Symbol Map

1. Choose Single Symbol from the list of classification options.

2. Click the Color box to bring up a color picker and change the color to one of the available choices, or create a custom color.

3. Click the Style drop down menu to see the different symbology choices. These will differ depending on whether your data is point, line, or polygon.

4. Click Apply, or click OK to change the display.

Value Map

The Value Map classification draws features by applying a different color to each unique value in the specified field.
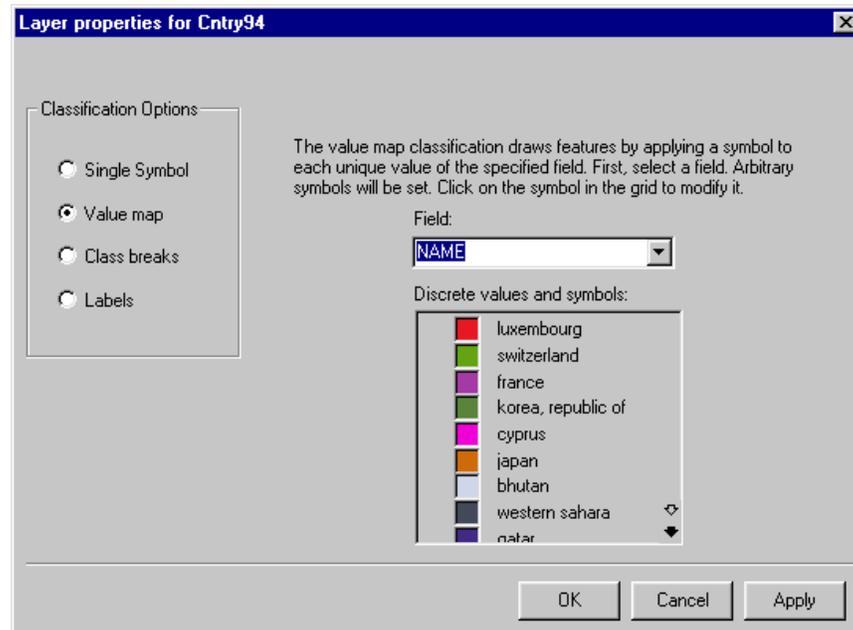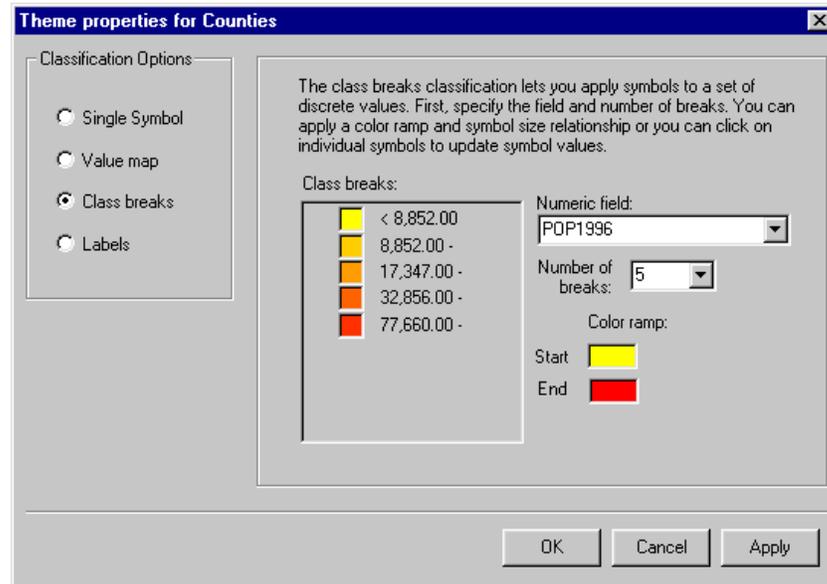

To create a Value map:

1. Choose Value map from the list of Classification options.

2. Click on the Field drop down menu to see the list of fields in the GIS database.

3. Select a field to use for the value map (e.g., NAME). ArcExplorer automatically assigns random colors to each unique classification.

4. Click Apply and click OK.

5. Choose Clear Thematic Classification from the Theme Menu, or click the Clear Thematic Classification tool , to remove the classification from the active theme and return to the single symbol mode.

Class breaks

The Class breaks option lets you create graduated color maps. Varying colors are applied to sets of discrete values from a specified field in the database using the quantile classification method. In the quantile method, each class is assigned the same number of features.


To create a Class Breaks map:

1. Choose Class breaks from the list of Classification options.

2. Pick a variable from the Numeric field drop down list. This field contains the values that will be mapped.

3. Choose how many discrete breaks you want in your classification from the drop down list.

4. Click on the Start color and End color boxes to change the starting and ending colors for your color ramp.

5. Click Apply to change the color ramp.

6. Click OK to dismiss the Layer Properties dialog.

6. Choose Clear Thematic Classification from the Theme Menu, or click the Clear Thematic Classification tool, to remove the classification from the active theme and return to the single symbol mode.

Labels

The Labels option draws maps that are labeled with data from a specified text field in the database. Label layers can be used in conjunction with other types of layers to label things.
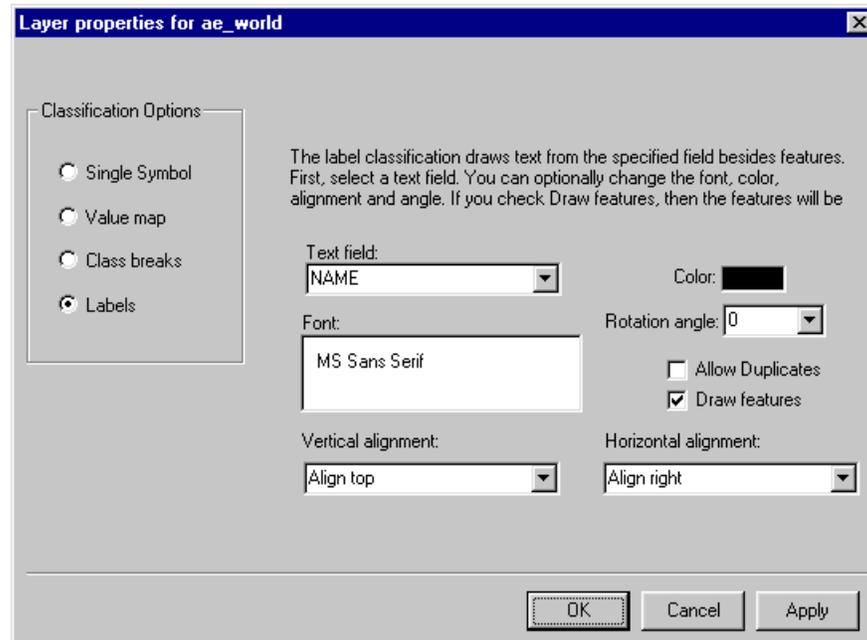
**To create a labeled map**

1.   Choose Labels from the list of classification options.

2.   Select a Text field from the drop down list.

3.   Click the Font box to change the font style, size or color.

4.   Use the vertical and horizontal alignment tools to control the label position relative to the center of the feature being labelled.

5.   Enter a value from 0 to 360 if you wish to rotate the labels. 0 is default and results in a line of normal horizontal text

6.   Click the Allow Duplicates box off if you want a label to appear only once even if there is more than one feature with the same name.

7.   Unclick the Draw features box if you wish to see only the labels and not the underlying features that were used to create the labels.

8.   Click Apply and OK to dismiss the dialog box.

9.   Choose Clear Thematic Classification from the Theme Menu, or click the Clear Thematic Classification tool, to remove the classification from the active theme and return to the single symbol mode.

Using MapTips

Map Tips are a type of contextual user assistance that work on Local Map Views. They are small, pop-up windows that display the data for a specified field as the cursor is moved over the features of an active theme. (In WWW mode you must right click a feature to see the Map Tip; in Local Mode they just appear).

To create MapTips for a theme:

1.   Make a theme active by clicking its name in the Table of Contents.

2.   Click the MapTips tool ▣ to bring up the Map Tips dialog box.
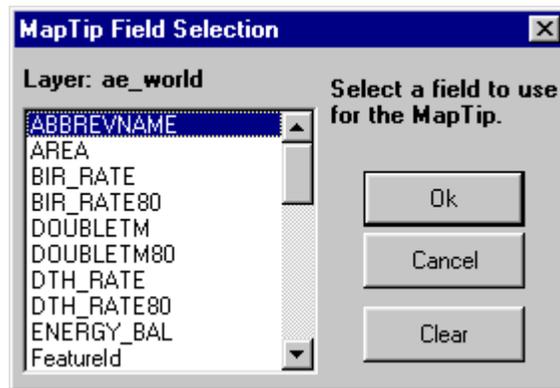
3.   Select the field that you want displayed in the Map Tip pop-up windows.

4.   Press OK.

Working with scale

Each time you zoom in and zoom out in a view or resize a view's window, its scale automatically changes. ArcExplorer reports the scale in the Scale Bar. Right clicking on the scale bar brings the Map Units and Scale Units control.

Map units

Map units are the units of the Map View's display surface. If the data has not been projected (i.e., stored in decimal degrees) map units are the units in which the coordinates of the spatial data contained in your view are stored. If the view has been projected, Map units are the units into which this data is being projected in the view. ArcExplorer defaults to decimal degrees as the map units and that can be wrong. You must first provide the correct map units for the scale bar units to be accurate. Right click the scale bar to change the Map Units:
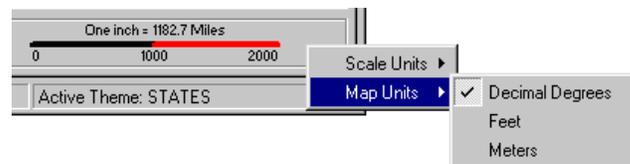
Scale Units

Scale units are what show up in the actual scale bar. Right click the scale bar to change the scale units:
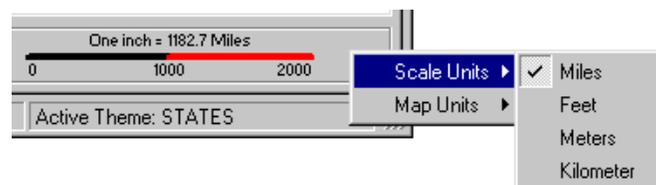
You can also control the scale at which a theme displays by setting the scale threshold for it. For example, you could set a local streets theme to display only if you were zoomed in close enough.

**To set the Minimum and Maximum Scale Factor for a theme:**

1. Use the zoom tools to set the scale point at which you want a theme to display (or not display).

2. Make the theme active by clicking its name in the table of contents.

3. Right click on the theme's name and choose Set Minimum Scale factor if you want the theme to turn off if you zoom any closer. Select Set Maximum Scale factor if you want the theme to turn off if you zoom further out.

4. Right click a theme's name and choose Remove Scale factors to remove any scale factors previously set for that theme.

5. From the View menu, choose View Scale Bar to toggle the Scale bar on and off in the Map View

Working with the Overview Map

The Overview map window shows you a small version of the full extent of your entire dataset with a box drawn over the current extent of the view. Overview maps are a useful way to let users always know precisely where they are zoomed in on a large dataset.

How to create an overview map

1. Choose Overview from the View menu to create a blank overview window in the lower left hand corner of the application.

2. To pick a Theme to appear in the overview, hold down the Control key while using the right mouse button to drag and drop the theme directly into the overview window. Alternately, you can right click on a theme and choose Use in Overview Map from the list. A rectangular box will show you the extent of the current view.
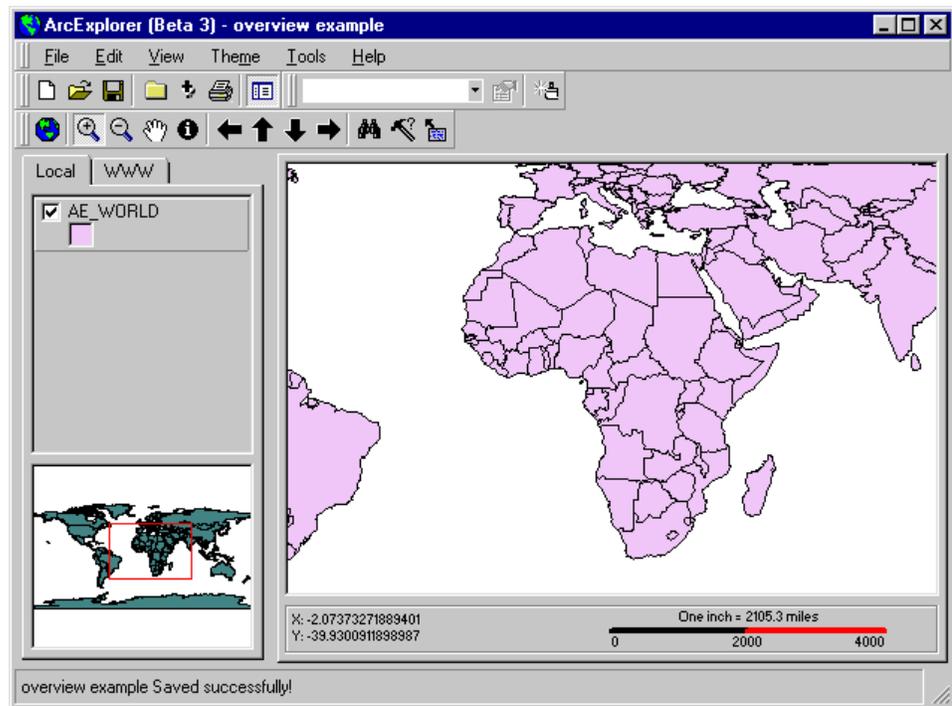

3. Drag the red box map inside the Overview Window to pan the Map View.

4. To get rid of the Overview Map, choose the Overview option from the view menu. This toggles the Overview Map on and off.

Identifying and finding features in ArcExplorer

ArcExplorer has several functions that make it easy to explore your locally stored GIS databases.

**To identify a feature in an ArcExplorer vew:**

1. Click on a theme in the Local table of contents to make it active.

2. Click on the Identify tool ❶.

3. Move the cursor over the view and click on the feature in the active theme you wish to identify.

4. The Identify results window appears listing data from all the fields in the database. If more than one feature was identified, ArcExplorer will tell you how many and let you pick the one you want to see from the Feature drop-down list.
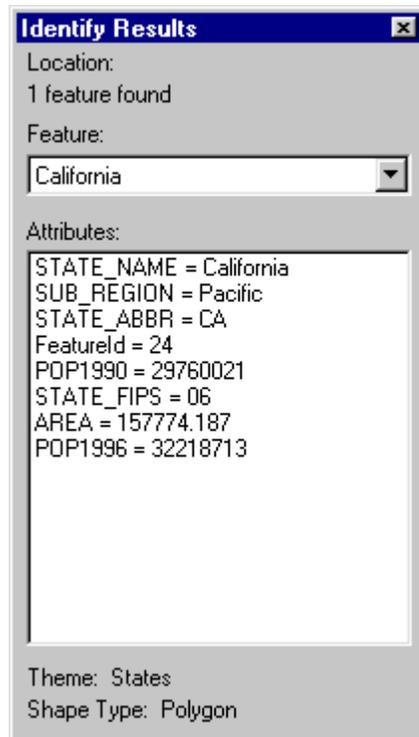
5. **Click the Close button to dismiss the Identify Results window.**

To find a specific feature by name or value in ArcExplorer:

1. Click on a theme in the Local table of contents to make it active.

2. Click on the Find Features tool 🔍 to bring up the Find Features dialog box.
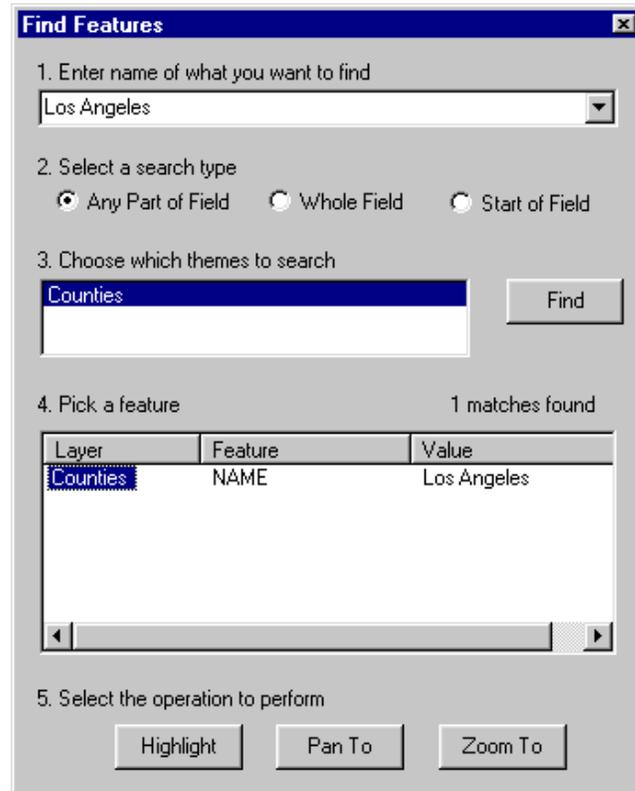
**Fill out the Find Features input form:**

1. Type a name or number in the text window.

2. Select which type of field search you want. You can search any part of a field, the entire field, or the start of a field.

3. Highlight the theme or themes you want to search and press the Find button.

4. From the list of found features, select the one you want to find by clicking the item under the Layer column.

5. Press Highlight to see the feature flash on the view; press the Pan to button to pan the display to the found feature; press the Zoom to button to zoom the view into the found feature.

6. Sort the find results by any field by pressing the title of that column.

Querying data with ArcExplorer

Queries allow you to select one or more features based on a precise definition of what you are looking for. Building a query is a powerful way to select features in ArcExplorer because a query can include multiple attributes, operators, and calculations.

To build a query in ArcExplorer:

1. Click on a theme in the Local table of contents to make it active.

2. Press the Query tool ![query tool icon] to bring up the Query Builder.
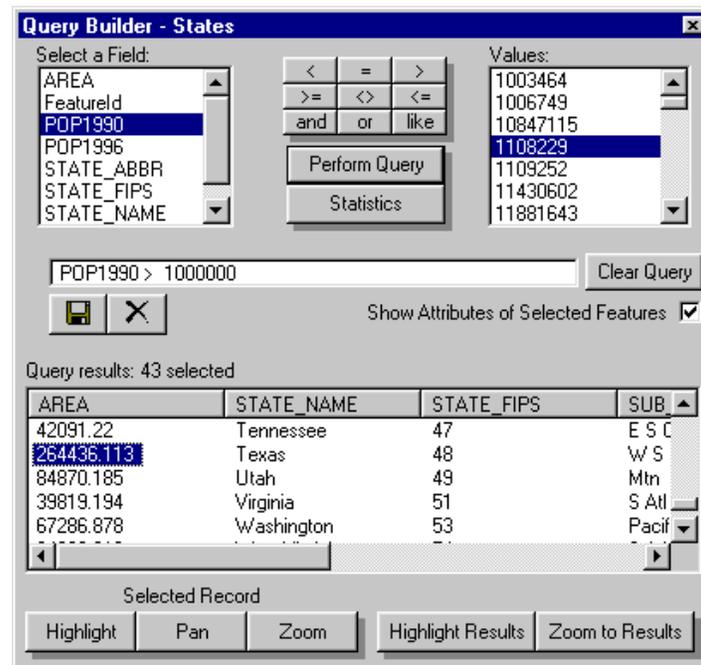
3. Select a field to query.

4. Click on the operators, or type a query into the query window.

5. Press the Perform Query button to execute the query.

All the features that meet the query definition will appear in the search results window.

Working with Query results:

1. Press the Clear Results button ![X icon] to clear the Query Results window.

2. Press the Highlight Results button to highlight all the features that met the query in the Map View. Use the Zoom to Results button to zoom in on just these features.

3. Pick a single record from the results window and press Highlight to flash the feature. Press Pan or Zoom to see that feature in the Map View.

4. Sort the query results by any field by pressing the title of that column.

To run get summary statistics from a field:

1. In the Query Builder, press the Statistics button.

2. Select the field you want statistics for from the Select a Field for Statistics Dialog Box:
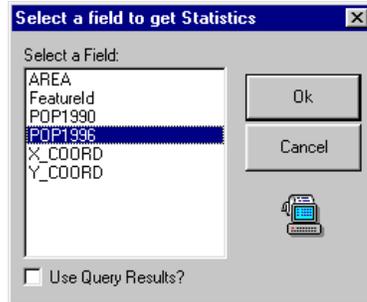
3. By default, ArcExplorer will generate statistics for all records; put a check mark next to Use Query Results if you want statistics on just the query results.

4. The Summary Statistics will appear in the window at the lower part of the Query Builder:

Summary Statistics
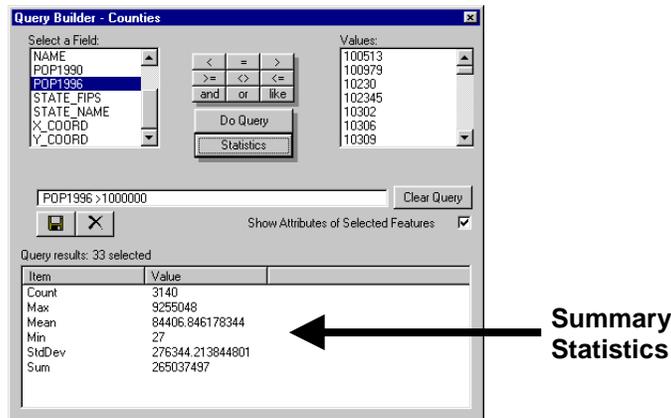
To Save the results of a Query or Summary Statistics to an ASCII file:

1. Press the Save Results button 🖫 above the Query Results window to create.

2. Name the new file and press Save.

This is what the resulting delimited ASCII text file (of the previous query results) looks like:

NAME|STATE|STATE_FIPS|CNTY_FIPS|FIPS|AREA|POP1990|POP1996|X_COORD|Y_COORD
King|53|033|53033|2188.8703|1507319|1645096|-121.74214|47.43013
Hennepin|27|053|27053|606.3642|1032431|1064043|-93.46867|45.01848
Middlesex|25|017|25017|847.526|1398468|1407602|-71.46432|42.44005
Cuyahoga|39|035|39035|469.4677|1412140|1396483|-81.66462|41.4519

Note: You can open an ASCII text file in a spreadsheet program for word processor create a report based on a query or statistical summary.


Copying map views for use in other applications

Sometimes you may want to copy the image of a map view for use in another Windows application (like a word processor or drawing program). ArcExplorer makes it easy to create a graphic image from your view.

To create a graphic from an Explorer view:

1. Set the theme display characteristics and zoom in so that the map in the Explorer view looks just the way you want it.

2. Pull down the Edit menu, or right click in the Explorer view, to access the Copy to Clipboard and Copy to File commands:
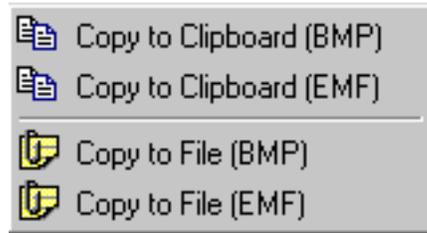
3. Choose Copy to Clipboard if you plan to go directly into another Windows program and paste the image in directly.

4. Choose Copy to File if you want to create a permanent file to use at any time in the future. If you do this, ArcExplorer will prompt you to name the new file.

5. Use the BMP (Windows Bitmap) option if the image is composed of filled areas.

6. Use the EMF (Enhanced Metafile) option if the map is comprised of vectors (lines).

Printing your maps

ArcExplorer automatically formats printed output from your views, complete with a legend, title, scale bar, north arrow, and date. The map will include all themes that are checked on in the table of contents.

To print a map of your Explorer view:

1. Set the theme display characteristics and zoom in so that the map in the Explorer view looks just the way you want it to look on paper.

2. Choose Print from the File menu, or press the Print tool 🖨 to begin the printing process.

3. ArcExplorer will prompt you to enter a title for the map. Type some text and press OK to send the map to your default Windows printer. If you want to send the print job to something other than your standard default printer (like a color inkjet, for instance), you'll need to set that printer as your default.

Saving your work in ArcExplorer

There may be times when you wish to save an ArcExplorer session for later use. When you create an ArcExplorer file (*.mot), you're not altering the data in any way. All you're doing is saving the location of the data (including any web sites that you connected to during your session), as well as any classification settings that you made.

To save an Explorer view:

1. Choose Save from the File menu, or press the Save tool .

2. Name your Explorer view.

3. Press OK.

Note: If you open a saved Explorer view, and any of the data has changed location, ArcExplorer will tell you that it experienced an error reading the shapefile and move on. You will have to discard the *.mot file and start again.

Frequently asked questions

Q. What is ArcExplorer?

ArcExplorer is like a Web-enabled, lightweight version of ArcView. ArcExplorer is a standalone application that can be used to display and query GIS data, and when connected to an ESRI Internet Map Server, can be used to browse and fetch vector data in standard shapefile format.

Q. What data does ArcExplorer support?

ArcExplorer can be used with ARC/INFO coverages, shapefiles, SDE layers, and a wide variety of image formats, including JPEG and GIF.

Q. How does it work as an Internet client application?

ArcExplorer will be connectable to any ArcView or MapObjects-based Internet Map Server site. Just type in the URL and you can browse 'maps' or download the data that you see.

Q. How does the vector data get delivered?

The vector data is extracted by the server, compressed, and then shipped via the Internet to your ArcExplorer client, where it is restored in standard shapefile format. The data can be cached temporarily, or can be stored at any location on disk.

Q. What Internet sites can I access to get data?

Currently there are only a few sites that include the capability to serve data to the ArcExplorer via the Internet. These sites have been built and are maintained by ESRI. As the next versions of ArcView Internet Map Server and MapObjects Internet Map Server extensions are released, any ESRI IMS site can be configured to deliver data to ArcExplorer clients. Eventually we believe that there will be a large worldwide network of servers providing data to ArcExplorer clients.

Q. Is ArcExplorer a fully supported product?

Yes, ArcExplorer will be fully supported via an online support forum available from ESRI's external Web pages.

Q. Is the ArcExplorer customizable?

ArcExplorer is not customizable by the end user. Custom ArcExplorer implementations can be delivered by contracting the ESRI Implementation Services Group.

Q. Why is it free?

The idea is to provide useful, free Internet clients to capture the market and increase ESRI Internet Map Server sales. ArcExplorer also increases the proliferation of ESRI data formats, and will increase the number of potential SDE clients. ArcExplorer also fulfills the ESRI vision of widespread, readily available GIS data exploration tools, contributing to the creation of a true 'societal' GIS.

Q: Can I just drag and drop a Shapefile to add it to an Explorer View?

Yes. ArcExplorer uses OLE technology to allow you to grab any Shapefile (*.shp) from a Windows directory and drop it into the Explorer view to add it as a theme.

Q: Can I move the toolbars and menus around to suit my task at hand and personal preferences?

Yes. The menu bar and button bar are both docking elements, so you can reposition them in the interface by just clicking and dragging them around. You can even undock them so they're floating free anywhere in the application window. Double click a repositioned tool or menu bar to return it to its original position.

Q: What happens when I right click in the Map View?

You get access to the following tools in a pop-up menu: Full View, Zoom in and out, Pan. Identify, Find, and Query. (Pressing the Control key while right clicking the Map View in WWW mode has the same effect).

Q: When I'm copying a view, either to the clipboard or to a file, how do I know whether to save as a Windows Bitmap (BMP) or Enhanced Metefile (EMF)?

EMF is best for vectors (lines); BMP is best for areas that include fills or patterns.

Q: Can I use data that I'm seeing through the WWW client in the same Explorer View as my locally stored data?

You have to first download the web-based data as a Shapefile and then add it to your local view.

Q: What is ArcExplorer, in technical terms?

ArcExplorer is a 32-bit, Windows application built with MapObjects, an embeddable mapping component technology from ESRI.

Q: Can I have more than one ArcExplorer session running concurrently?

Yes, open as many new or saved files as you wish. A new ArcExplorer application window will appear for each session.

Q: What's all this I keep hearing about ArcExplorer's non-modal forms?

It means that you can leave a form open and go do other things in the program. This might come in handy, for instance, if you where building a complex query, and needed to check something in the view. With non-modal forms, there's no need to dismiss the query dialog, you just toggle between the open windows.