

# Black Country Observatory

## Black Country Knowledge Training Notes, February 2006

### 1. Introduction

In order to enhance the service on offer to you we have recently upgraded Black Country Knowledge. This upgraded version incorporates many of the suggestions that were made by you, the user. We hope you enjoy the current changes and always welcome feedback (positive and negative!) so that we can continue to make changes to give you the best system available.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Black Country Knowledge it is an easy to use web based knowledge management system with tools for analysing and presenting data in tables, charts, graphs and thematic maps.

On the following pages is a step-by-step user guide incorporating instructions and exercises (coloured in red) so that you can become familiar with the basic functions and the new upgraded features. **New features are highlighted in pink.**

### 2. Starting

To begin please open Internet Explorer and type in the address of the Black Country Observatory homepage:

<http://www.blackcountryobservatory.co.uk>

In the centre of the home page you will see the following icon:

Black Country  
Knowledge

To open 'Black Country Knowledge' simply click on it.

***Whilst using the system should you encounter any problems or have any queries please bring them to the attention of Observatory staff.***



### 3. What can I access

Black Country Knowledge is currently home to over 120 data sets. These are updated and expanded daily. The indicators cover 6 main themes:

Theme:	Example of data available:
➤ <b>Economy</b>	Numbers of businesses by sector
➤ <b>Environment</b>	Average house prices
➤ <b>Health</b>	Teenage Conception Rates
➤ <b>Knowledge Economy</b>	Employment in knowledge intensive sectors
➤ <b>Learning</b>	% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE's
➤ <b>People</b>	Number of crimes committed
➤ <b>Headline</b>	Summary
➤ <b>RES</b>	Regional Economic Strategy
➤ <b>Sandwell</b>	Neighbourhood Indicators
➤ <b>Walsall</b>	



A full list of available indicators is available to download via our website <http://www.blackcountryobservatory.co.uk/knowledge.asp>. To download the list click on the document titled 'Indicators available'. This is updated monthly. You can also a link to this file from the home page of BC Knowledge.

### 4. Searching for data

You can search the many indicators on Black Country Knowledge in several ways:

- (1) **Browse** the various themes

#### Try it for yourself...

Browse the contents of these folders by clicking  to reveal the full sets of indicators currently available on the system. How many headline indicators can you see?<sup>1</sup> Each indicator is represented by .

Some of the themes will have sub-folders; can you see how many sub-folders we have under Economy?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Correct Answer is 9..

<sup>2</sup> The Correct Answer is 4..Business Development, Exports, Labour Market, Wealth & Investment


(2) **Search** using free text - enter your search term in the search box



(the white box above BCO) and click . **Tip: limiting your search to two words yields the best results.**

(3) Use the '**Advanced Search**' - this allows you to search specific 'metadata' fields for the information you require.




### Try it for yourself...


Click on the  alongside the search field - This will display an advanced search window. From the first drop down menu select 'Date available' and type 2005 in the empty text box. You will be shown all the indicators that have become available in 2005. How many can be seen?

## 5. Viewing the data

A new feature of Black Country Knowledge is that the tables and metadata are now displayed separately. Metadata is simply the data about the data e.g. where the data comes from, when it will next be updated and also issues you need to be aware of when using the data etc.

### Try it for yourself...

Go to the Learning folder, click on  to reveal the sub-folders, click on  beside the GCSE folder. The indicator relating to GCSE's are represented by . Click on the indicator 'GCSE Performance by Local Learning Partnership Area 2001-2004' and you will see the data table in the right side of the screen.

To access the metadata relating to this indicator click on Metadata which is written under  on the left side of the screen or click on Description shown in the top menu bar. This provides you with all the data you need to know about the data.

As the new system keeps the table and metadata separate it allows for a larger portion of your viewing screen to be dedicated to viewing the table. Should you wish to make the indicators list or the data table area bigger click on the small line (it will be red or orange depending what view you are in) to the left of the word 'Description' in the header of the screen and move it in the direction you wish.

## 5. Altering the data

You can alter the contents of the table to suit your needs.

### Try it for yourself...

Above the table you will see a number of dropdown menus. Using the GCSE indicator you will see three dropdown menus – Area, GCSE Performance and Year. You can use these variables to alter the contents of the table, for example, click on year and from the dropdown menu choose categories. You will see a list of all the years for which data is available – in this case 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04. It is possible to deselect all or select all from the buttons at the top or simply click the years that you do or don't want to see. For this example click on 'deselect all', then click on 2003/04 and press Update. You will see that the table has now changed to just include the year selected.

You can use the other dropdown menus to alter the table for the geographical area and also which GCSE performance variable you want to see.

The data tables have pivot table functionality so all of the information can be interchanged from row to column and from column to row using the dropdown menus.

### Try it for yourself...

Type BC17 in the search box to access the indicator on the '% of working age population by qualification level, 1999-2003'. Click on the dropdown menu for year and select 'Move to Column' and watch how the table changes. If you want to return the table to how it was click on 'Move to Row'.


You can also now click on 'Move to Layers'. This enables you to see one year of data at a time. Click on the dropdown menu and change to 2001.

## 6. Applications

When using the Black Country Knowledge you are not restricted to displaying the data in tabular form. There are a number of simple applications, which enable you to turn a data table into a graphic at the touch of a button.

### ➤ Bar Charts

### Try it for yourself...


From the Environment Folder, select the indicator – ‘Average House Prices, Quarterly, April 2002 – Sept 2004’, and click on the  icon to create a bar chart. You need to firstly select what type of bar chart you want –either horizontal  or vertical .

You can alter the start and end points of the scale by entering in the appropriate numbers in the scale at the base of the graph and clicking ‘Change’. ‘Reset’ will return the axis to its’ original scale.

### ➤ Time series graphs

The data can also be viewed in the form of a time series graph.


#### Try it for yourself...

Click on the  icon to create a time-series graph. Again experiment with changing the start and end points of the scale by entering in the appropriate numbers in the scale at the base of the graph.

### ➤ Thematic maps

The data can also be presented in thematic map form. This is only possible for the Black Country area. For more sophisticated mapping techniques talk to us about ‘**Black Country Map**’ – our web based Geographical Information System (GIS).

#### Try it for yourself...



Click on the  icon to create a thematic map. Use the dropdown menus to alter the variable. You can also change the number of groups.

All of these charts can be copied and pasted directly into your PowerPoint presentation.

## 7. Exporting the data

All the data can be directly downloaded into Excel.



#### Try it for yourself...

Click on the  icon to get back to the table view. In the top right hand corner click on the excel icon  and the table will automatically download into Excel.

## 8. Printing the data

The data tables and the metadata can be printed straight from the screen.


### Try it for yourself...

Click on the  icon and select print. If you are viewing a data table then the table will print. To print the metadata go into 'Description' and click on the  icon again.

## 9. Create a Bookmark

It is now possible to create a bookmark to a table that you are specifically interested in, or have created with specific information. The bookmark allows yourself and whoever else you pass it to, to view the table directly without having to recreate it or search for it.

### Try it for yourself...



Open the 'Economy' folder, Business Development sub-folder and click on the indicator 'Number of Companies by Industry Sector, 1998-2003'. Alter the table using the dropdown menus to just see data on the Black Country for 2003. Then click the bookmark icon  and a bookmark to this table will automatically be created. Anytime you wish to see this particular table just click on the bookmark and you can return to that table whenever you wish.

## 10. Survey Data

The system now enables you to view survey data alongside data tables. At present we hold information on the survey questions asked by the BC Local Authorities Citizens' Panels and the BCCBL Surveys. It is hoped that eventually we will be able to publish data alongside the questions, which will allow users to create your own cross tabulations of the survey results.

### Try it for yourself...

Click on the folder called 'Surveys' and open up the 'Wolverhampton' folder. Click on the September 2003 questionnaire. Firstly you will see the metadata on the right hand side of the screen which tells you all about the survey.

To access the questions click on  beside 'Variable description' (which is displayed under the metadata option), again click on the  beside each section and all the questions asked in the survey relating to that area will be displayed on the left hand side of the screen. Click on an area you are interesting in and view the question in the right side of the screen. When the answers are added you will be able to see the number of responses and conduct some analysis of the variables.

## Other Services Provided by the BC Observatory

### → Research Database

Our research database is currently home to nearly 300 reports. If you have never used this service before you can access it via [www.blackcountryobservatory.co.uk](http://www.blackcountryobservatory.co.uk). Click on the link to the 'research database'

#### Try it for yourself...

You can search in 3 ways – by theme, key word or by type. Try to find the latest Knowledge Economy Barometer – Look under the 'economic and finance theme' or use 'barometer' as a key word search or click on report under type.

When you search generally you will see a list of entries, to find out more details on any click on the 'View Details' link. Here you will be able to find out further information and download the report if it is available.

All the outputs from the Black Country Study are accessible via this database. You may find some of the reports are password protected due to confidentiality. Talk to us if you are interested in accessing any of them.

Please let us know when you are thinking of embarking upon any research or employing a consultant etc. so that we can keep this resource up to date and minimise duplication.

### → Barometers

All the indicators in Black Country Knowledge are analysed and reported upon in our Barometer reports. The timetable for the forthcoming year is shown below. Also included in the table are the dates for our Steering group meetings. We are planning to change the format of these to make these more evidence debates on a selected topic. **If you would like to present at any of these please let us know.**

**BRAIN** is the Black Country Research and Information Network, which seeks to co-ordinate research activity through the sharing of information, research and consultation across the members of BRAIN.

## FEED-BACK

Many thanks for attending today's training session. We hope you found it useful. We would be most grateful if you could take the time to answer the following questions:

### Black Country Knowledge

Do you have any general comments on the system?

Are there any specific areas you liked?

Are there any specific areas you disliked?

Are there any additional functions you would find useful?

Are there any indicators/data-sets that you would like to see added?

Are there other geographical breakdowns that you would find useful?

### **Black Country Research Database**

If you would like to be e-mailed whenever an item is added to the database please enter your email and also the areas that you are interested in.

Any suggestions on how we could improve the research database?

### **Black Country Barometer**

Are you on the Barometer Distribution List?  
If not please enter your email below if you would like to be added.

Any suggestions on items you would like included in the Barometer?

### **Anything else**

Anything else you would like to tell us...

**Thank you**