Point Symbol Mapping

What Makes a Good Point Symbol Map?

Point symbol mapping is a fairly simple mapping process that can be applied to many mapping projects. Point symbols can be applied to points, lines and regions. There are two main ways to differentiate data in a point symbol map: classified data and unclassed data. Classified data can have an infinite number of classes and uses range graded symbols as well as a classification scheme. This means that if one circle represents 10,000 units a half of a circle represents 5,000 units and so forth. The unclassed method uses proportion scaling, 1, 2, and 3D scaling, and psychological scaling techniques. Psychological scaling or the Flannery method, inflates the real values of the points to give a visual exaggeration of the points, making it easy to differentiate between points. A cartographer must also select the appropriate symbolization for the data. Quantive data should be symbolized with different size symbols such as the maps below. I also normalized the data to reflect the average sales per acre.

This map uses the psychological or Flannery method to classify data. The dots are proportional to each other and it is easy to see a relationship in the map. This map uses only three classes of data compared to the map on the right which uses five classes. One can easily differentiate between areas of low values such as north eastern Minnesota, and compare the size of points in central Minnesota. I would recommend this method for mapping for average farm sales in 1987.

This map uses the classed method of classification. The dots are relative in size to the value that they represent. It is somewhat difficult to determine what the specific size of the dot is or even what the dot represents. This map uses five classes instead of three to help differentiate between classes.