

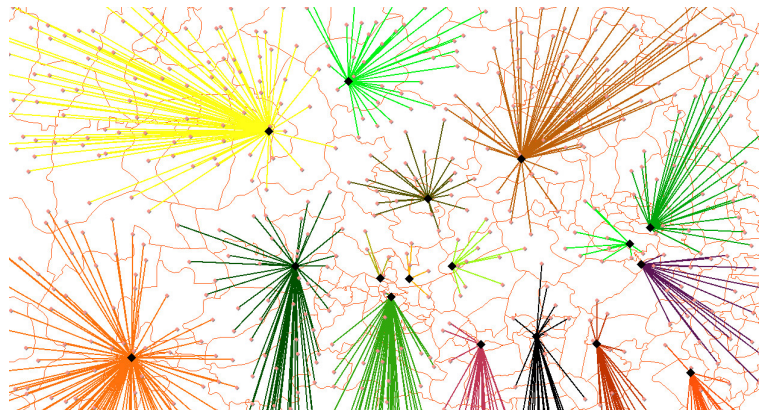
This Week's Wisdom:

Spider graph vs Distance Calculator

Both of these free tools (found in the Tool Manager) can measure straight-line distances in MapInfo but which one is better? Which one is quicker? The answer really depends on what you are trying to achieve.

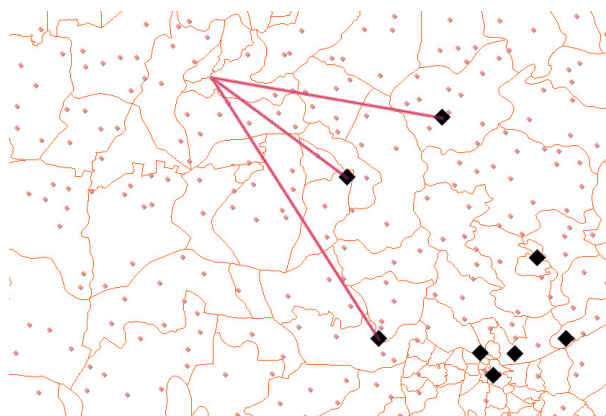
Spider Graph Tool

The spider graph tool is a quick and easy way to plot your distance data on a map. In this example, we're showing which children go to which school using the common column 'School ID' across both tables. Each school is given a different colour which makes the graph easy to interpret nomatter how muddled the lines get. The distances are generated in a new table for you to browse and the colours can be turned on or off using the dialog box.



Distance Calculator

On first glance, the distance calculator is a lot more complicated than the Spider Graph tool. The Spider Graph has a one click button - Create Lines - whereas the Distance Calculator first requires you to click 'Calculate Distances'. These results are then saved to a table which you must then open to view the lines on a map. The lines are produced in black, which can quickly become overcrowded without any colour definition. Analysis can be made by showing a query on the map instead of the whole table. Once you delve in to the Distance Calculator Dialog Box, you'll realise that this tool has a lot more to offer than the Spider Graph tool (albeit without the automatic colouring!).



In the example above, we have chosen to show the first three nearest schools to each pupil. We've then made a selection to show only one pupil on our map. This made use of the 'Enter the number of distances to find' box (3!). You can also find the closest or furthest point or use a criteria to narrow the search further. If you would rather choose your selection spatially, you can use the map preview window and the Marquee/polygon/boundary selection tools to quickly create a selection.

If you want a quick visual representation of your distance data then the Spider Graph tool will do this brilliantly in just a few clicks. If you need to carry out more indepth analysis then the Distance Calculator is the better choice.

