

Why have a study area description?

- Needed in a report or paper when a specific place or region is the focus of the paper
- Usually is accompanied by a map

Examples

- NO: Review of the use of GIS in climate-change studies
- YES: Review of the use of GIS in climate-change studies in Maldives
- NO: The transportation system of the US
- YES: The transportation network of southern Alabama
- NO: Theoretical design of on-campus parking in the US
- YES: Theoretical design and implementation of on-campus parking in the US: Success and failures of a case study at the University of South Alabama

Study area description

- Length should be 1-2 paragraphs
- Informative to someone who knows nothing about the place
- Detail in the study area description will vary depending on the AUDIENCE
 - Regional audience – someone who is familiar with the region but not the specific place as it relates to the research topic
 - National audience - someone familiar with the US (i.e. they know where Alabama is but know nothing about Mobile)
 - International audience – knows the countries

Questions to consider

- Description answers the questions:
 - What is the region like?
 - Why do the study *there*?
 - What variables about the study area may influence the project?
 - What previous studies on the same topic and using the same region have been completed?
 - What is the historical context of the problem in the region?

Study area description

- Description will vary depending on the use of the study area in the paper
 - Human-based study
 - Socio-economic characteristics may be used: income, age, race, education level
 - Not all have to be included in every study
 - Physical-based study
 - Environmental characteristics: soil type, climate, topography, geology
 - Inclusion depends on relevance