THE VERGE

Terrapattern is the first open-access visual search engine for satellite maps

Machine learning is everywhere

By Micah Singleton *on May 27, 2016 12:19 pm*

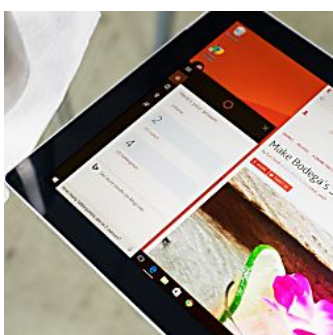Terrapattern is a amazing visual search engine for satellite imagery, and somehow the first of its kind. It's very easy to use, click on a section of the map, and Terrapattern will show you all similar geographical features or landmarks in the area. A football field, bus station, outdoor pool — it doesn't matter, Terrapattern can pinpoint the related image and location with surprising accuracy.

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The program was created by Golan Levin, David Newbury, and Kyle McDonald, with funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Terrapattern is built on a Deep Convolutional Neural Network (DCNN), and has been trained to recognize geographical features within small squares in four cities — New York, San Fransisco, Pittsburgh, and Detroit.

In an interview with *Popular Science*, Levin said he and the team built Terrapattern to open up the visual mapping search to a larger audience (the US Military has had similar tech for years), and hopes that it would eventually make it into other mapping platforms like Google Maps. "I wanted a way we could open this technology to everyone: citizen scientists, journalists and artists, or just everyday people who want to understand the world in a better way," Levin said.

You can test out Terrapattern here and check out the code on GitHub.

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