Second Activity

Sept. 7, 2010

1. Visit this Senate website and observe the data that you find there. Did every senator vote? What are the possible votes for a senator?

2. Try changing the URL in your browser to find out information about the FIRST vote in the 107th Congress rather than the 236th vote. You don't know how to do this exactly, but make a guess. Try to find out about the first vote of the 106th Congress as well.

3. Notice, near the top right of the white portion of the page, the text "XML"; click on it, spend some time looking at the resulting page. It should look like mostly gibberish at this point, but take a few minutes and try to notice some structure and patterns in it.

4. Using either the human-readable form of the page or the XML form, describe how (given infinite time and a huge workforce), you'd approach the "how much like Ted" question. Write a "recipe" for carrying out your plan. Your recipe might start with something like this:

   - Figure out how many votes were taken in the 107th Congress.
   - For each vote, for each senator, record his/her vote in a large table, where each row corresponds to a senator, and each column to a single vote ...