A Tale of Two Airports
AN EXPLORATION OF FLIGHT TRAFFIC AT OAK AND SFO

1. What happened to OAK in 1994?
In 1994 Southwest opened a crew base at Oakland. Since then the majority of flights to and from OAK are with Southwest. SFO's largest airline is United. SkyWest is probably operating as United Express. Flights to and from SFO exhibit some seasonality, with more flights during the summer, whereas flights at OAK do not.

2. Why does SFO suffer more from 9/11?
OAK suffers only a small drop (top) in flight numbers after September 11 because Southwest maintains flight volume at OAK. In fact looking across all airports nationally (bottom) Southwest is the only carrier to maintain flight volume after September 11. United filed for bankruptcy in Dec 2002.

3. Why the recent dive at OAK?
Flights from OAK to most destinations decreased in 2008. Shown here are destinations which decrease the most. Denver and Phoenix are interesting because as flights from OAK decreased flights from SFO increased.

4. What happens within a week?
Left: Weekends have fewer flights, especially Saturdays. (Below) At OAK the change in the number of flights within a week has been larger than that between months since about 1995.

Range of average flights per day by month and day of the week

5. What are the yearly outliers?
There are fewer flights around major holidays (left). Minor holidays: Martin Luther King Jr Day, Presidents Day, Columbus Day and Veterans Day have no effect on the number of flights.

(Right) When the holiday occurs on a Monday the preceding Sunday has fewer flights than usual. Thanksgiving Day has the fewest flights annually, with slightly increased flights the Wednesday before.

Tools Used
R + packages: ggplot2 plyr RColorBrewer sqldf3